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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Contents for First December Issue, 1917

Claymore *A Four-Part Story. Part I* . . . . . **Arthur D. Howden Smith** 3

A thrilling four-part story of the good swashbuckling days in old Scotland. English crowns changed heads overnight in those adventurous times—and the power of Scottish clans was a thing to be reckoned with. This tale of Scottish devotion to the Stuart cause tells you all about the adventurous "Bonnie Prince Charlie"—one of the most romantic figures in all history.

The Blue Wolf . . . . . **Arthur James Hayes** 29

A tiny ball of slate-gray fur whimpering and sick in the Alaskan cold. That is how the *Blue Wolf* came to *Kenana Bob*. But the puppy grows to doghood and then *Bob* proudly asserts: "There ain't nothing like him ever breathed." Judge for yourself how well the *Blue Wolf* was deserving of the boast.

The Six Silk Shirts of Silver Sam . . . . . **J. Allan Dunn** 38

Sody-water Jim holds that a silk shirt is always a cowpuncher's hoodoo. But *Silver Sam* braves superstition and buys a full half dozen. Perhaps if they had not been of such assorted and gaudy hues—well, you judge whether Jim is right or not.

When Old Glory Called . . . . . **Hapsburg Liebe** 52

Shall it be a broken promise to a fair señorita—or a broken army regulation? A Tennessee mountain soldier boy in the Philippines decides the question. And by no half-way measures.

Pikers Afloat *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Walt McDougall** 60

It all starts just because two soulful ex-drummers plan fabulous wealth from an Atlantic City amusement concession. It doesn't end, until you have taken a long sea voyage and been treated to a series of most astonishing adventures—and quite a few laughs.

Just a Hound *Poem* . . . . . **Ed L. Carson** 95

The Call of the Whippoorwill . . . . . **Edwin C. Dickenson** 96

You will wonder why the slight, effiminate youth is so very anxious to betray the hidden spy to the invading army. It wouldn't be fair to tell, until you have read the story.

Rugged Sons of the Woods . . . . . **Henry Oyen** 100

Pete Boileau and *Spike Carlson*, northwoods loggers, are ambling down the station platform. "By Jove! Look at those two specimens. True rugged sons of the woods," comes a high-pitched voice through the car window. Later developments are well worth following.

The Stranger . . . . . **Fred T. Barton** 109

Why should a disreputable-looking character deliberately slouch up to a perfectly harmless strange detective and "kid" him most outrageously? The doings that shortly follow in "Mike's Place" make things clear.

(Continued on next page)

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

The Island of Changing Shapes . . . . . **H. A. Lamb** 116

They are no ordinary men, the inhabitants of this mysterious South Sea island. They are gruesome, stuffed men. And you will learn why a dead native may sometimes be more dangerous than a live one.

The Misfit Becomes Chaperon . . . . . **William H. Hamby** 136

Suppose you were badly in need of a job and a mysterious stranger were to offer you ten dollars, just for meeting an unknown young woman at a railroad station. Would you take it? Well, *Simplex Cox* does. But it is not such easy money as it first appears.

The Hungry Crystal . . . . . **Hugh Pendexter** 150

Another Indian tale of early days. A subtle sixth sense urged *Benson*, the mighty deer hunter, against visiting a certain Cherokee village. But he went ahead—and lived to wish he had been guided by his better judgment.

Hira Singh's Tale *A Four-Part Story. Conclusion* . . . **Talbot Mundy** 156

For many months the remnant of a loyal Sikh regiment has been fighting inch by inch through enemy country to regain India. The concluding instalment of this great war serial tells of its ultimate fate.

A Time-Expired Man *Poem* . . . . . **John G. Gartland** 178

The Camp-Fire **A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers** 179

Adventure's Free Services and Addresses 185

Ask Adventure 186

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **George Richards**

Cover Design . . . . . **Walter DeMaris**

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published semi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for Oct. 1, 1917. State of New York. County of New York. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the *Adventure*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York. Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York. Managing Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York. Business Manager, JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, 223 Spring Street, New York. 2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.) *Owner:* THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, N.Y. *Stockholders:* THE FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J. THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, 223 Spring Street, New York City, N. Y. GEORGE B. BLACK, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota, Illinois. EMILY JOSEPHINE DONNER, P. O. Box 3036, New York City, N. Y. W. H. GELSHENEN, 100 William Street, New York City, N. Y. CLARA E. KEHOE, 2524 Creston Avenue, New York City, N. Y. H. F. MORSE, 3 West 46th Street, New York City, N. Y. LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 156 Ridge Street, Glens Falls, N. Y. MRS. ARETHUSA POND, 955 West End Avenue, New York City, N. Y. ERMAN J. RIDGWAY, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. AUGUSTUS VAN WYCK, 149 Broadway, New York City, N.Y. R. A. VAN WYCK, 149 Broadway, New York City, N.Y. G.W.WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. BEN F. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. MARIE A. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. 3. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)* THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, N.Y. JOHN O'HARA COSGRAVE, 128 West 59th Street, New York City, N. Y. MRS. J. O. HARDY, Tecumseh, Mich. GERTRUDE C. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York. MARTHA LEWIS, Westerville, Ohio. R. W. POOR, 5th Avenue and 23rd Street, New York City, N. Y. GEORGE W. WILDER Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. J. F. BIRMINGHAM, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day of September, 1917. JAMES B. SHEEHAN. (*My commission expires March* 30, 1918.)

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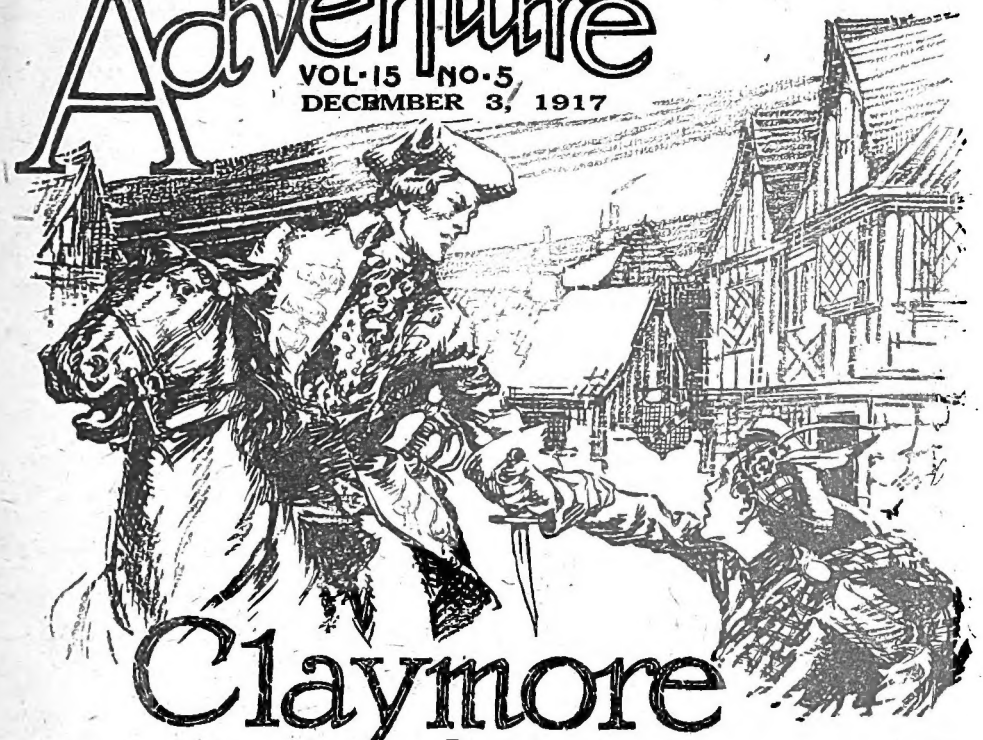

Claymore

A Four-Part Story
Part I

by
ARTHUR D·HOWDEN SMITH

Author of "Fair Salvage," "Contraband Matrimony," etc.

CHAPTER I

I RIDE TO DERBY

"BOY, you are a fool!" said my uncle.

"With all due respect, my lord, I am not a fool, and certes, I am no longer a boy."

I held my temper, for I knew the old man's ways. Testy, he was, yes, and irascible—especially when touched by his gout—but his bark was ever worse than his bite.

"Two-and-twenty!" he snorted back. "'Swoun's, Frank, y'are scarce from swaddling clothes."

"I am of age, my lord," I said firmly, "and that is more to the question."

"Would you defy me?" he roared.

"Nay, you know well I love you too much."

"Aye, mayhap, when your own wishes are not at stake. Where got you this idiot notion? A lost cause, lad, is no starting-point for a successful career."

"The papers in the priest's-hole told me otherwise," I countered, and that was my trump-card.

His face whitened.

"Y'have the secret, Frank?"

I nodded.

"Zounds!"

He brought his bandaged foot down from the settle and yelped with the pain of it.

"Who told you?" he asked through grim lips.

"I found out for myself. It was chance. I saw an unevenness in the dust on the Oak Room mantel, pressed and——"

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"You looked at the papers?"

"Yes, sir. I saw no harm."

"There was no harm." His brows knitted hard in thought. "I would not blame you, Frank. Indeed, and in time, you should have known from me. It was only—well, when you grow old, lad, you will learn that the old prefer to cover their mistakes from the young."

"I would not call that a mistake, my lord," I retorted hotly.

He gave me a curious glance.

"Gad, it's in the blood," he muttered.

"In the blood? I hope so," I declared.

And for the first time he laughed.

"Lord, lord!" he said, and laughed again. "If your father could see you, Frank! 'Twas this he feared from the first. There's a fascination in it for the Chisholms, and here have I been sitting quiet by my fire, after crushing the spirit out of myself, confident that it was gone from you, too. 'Tis I have been the fool, Frank."

He wagged his gray head solemnly.

"No use going over the old story, if you know," he said at last. "I was the careful man of the family in those days; it was your father who went too far. And so, when the Fifteen came and failure crushed the Old Chevalier, he must go overseas, to a life of exile and wandering.

"I was safe—I saw to those papers you discovered, and Marlborough stood my friend, the tricky dog! He was in deep enough, himself." My uncle sighed. "I did what I could for your father, Frank—what I could. But it was not much. He was at Sheriffmuir. Now, you would follow in his footsteps."

"Yes," was all I could think of to say.

"Your father was one of the few Englishmen out in the Fifteen. That was why we could never get his pardon. Scotchmen they would forgive, and even the Irish. But the English who went out were never trusted after. 'Twill be the same again, boy."

"But the issue will be different," I said confidently.

"So your father said."

"But how can you doubt, sir?" I cried. "Look what the Prince has achieved! He landed in the Highlands on August second, with but half-a-dozen followers. On September seventeenth he captured Edinburgh. Three days later he destroyed the English army in Scotland. In less than two months he won all the kingdom. Now, he has marched unopposed down into the heart of England, with nought but his Highlanders to back him. Why, he may be at London any day. It may be the Usurper has already flown."

My uncle glanced anxiously toward the door.

"Heaven send none of the servants be about!" he exclaimed. "I would recommend you, Frank, to be more careful of the terms in which you refer to his Britannic Majesty. At least, until you have gained Prince Charles's camp. And remember, also, that winning Scotland is a very different enterprise from winning England. The Prince has yet to defeat any of the principal English forces this side the border."

"He will do so when he is ready."

"Humph! I know not his forces, but it is certain Scotland alone can not best England, and our people here will not rise while there is a chance he may bring in the French. We want none of King Louis's dragoons murdering and burning our English countryside, lad—not even to fetch the Stuarts home."

"Then you are still for King James?" I asked eagerly.

Once more, my uncle carefully surveyed the room walls.

"Why, between ourselves, Frank," he admitted, "I don't mind saying I am. Speaking as a gentleman, I think better of the old régime than of the one this upstart Hanoverian gives us. The Stuarts were more Scotch than English, to be sure, but rather a Scotchman than a German any day, I say."

I leaned forward. This was my chance.

"Then I may go?"

"Not so fast, not so——"

He saw the look in my eye, and saved me from open rebellion.

"You would go even if I forbade it. Ah, Frank, Frank! Is this the way to treat the old man who has fathered you?"

He had me on ticklish ground here, and I grew uncomfortable.

"But, sir," I stumbled, "would you have me stay when my heart is crying to go? I should feel a knave if I remained home when Prince Charles was winning a throne and freedom for us from the Foreigner."

"Aye, lad." My uncle's voice was all kindliness. "You have the right point of honor. Well, I am undone. You have

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tricked me. What more can I say? 'Tis a foolish idea, I'll warrant you. But, if you will—why, go and God speed you. 'Tis the path a Chisholm should ride. And if the worst befall, ye have my influence—such as it is nowadays—to rely upon. I could not gain your father a pardon, but I may do more for the son."

I bowed low to him, exultation welling in my heart.

"You treat me most handsomely, my lord."

"Tut, tut!" He waved his hand. "When do you start, Frank?"

"Today. There is no time to lose. I would catch the Prince before he enters Derby and ride with him to London."

"Young blood would ever ride in haste. Hast made preparations for the venture?"

"Such as may be."

I thought of the slender horde in my purse, and the plan I had made to raise money on the brilliants set in the frame of my mother's miniature. He looked amused.

"How long hast been of this mind, Frank?"

"These many weeks," I answered somewhat shamefacedly.

"And only now——"

"Well, sir," I burst in, "if you would know, it cost me no small resolution to risk quarreling with you. You——"

"Come here, Frank," he said, and his dim, old eyes shone under their heavy-thatched brows.

I went to his side, and he motioned me to kneel beside his chair.

"Y'are over tall in your build for me," he said. "Frank, I take your last words kindly. I had hoped you loved me, boy. When you would have gone from me in my old age I began to doubt. Now you have made me happy. 'Tis no misstep to cheer the aged, Frank. Y'have done well. In return ye have such love as my old heart holds. But if ye go, I would have ye go as befitting a Chisholm, a good horse between your knees, a fat belt of guineas about you. So it shall be.

"Also, ye require advice. Nay, lad, I know this will be irksome. But a privilege of the aged is to irk youth with words. Ye shall hear me out. I was bred in courts and camps, as ye may have forgot, and what I tell you now I learned by bitter experience."

MY UNCLE spoke the truth, as I knew. There was a time when Lord Chisholm of Stradbrooke in Suffolk was hail-fellow-well-met with John Churchill and every other man of metal in London and Flanders. He led his troop at Blenheim and Malplaquet and later intrigued and plotted about the Court in the days when Bolingbroke strove to swing fat, placid Queen Anne in favor of the outlawed Stuarts.

He had talked seldom about this period of his career, deeming me until now a mere boy, scarce to be considered in the affairs of life. Doubt not I felt immensely flattered at the new note in his attitude toward me.

"In the first place," he said, "study silence. Silence, Frank, as some great man has said, is golden. Nay, it is priceless. By silence doth a man guard his neck and by silence doth he win place and power. The great especially do prize silence, and in dispensing their favors they reck heavily upon those who possess it. Therefore say little. Thine own affairs concern thee alone. The affairs of others may best be learned by seeming incurious. Talk not with strangers. Be cautious with acquaintances and guarded in reason with friends.

"In the second place, assay no man by his own estimate. Judge slowly and carefully. Be loath to make enemies. Remember to treat your superiors with respect, your equals with courtesy and your inferiors with kindness. Never speak harm of other men. In camps, as in courts, there are cabals and parties. Never be influenced by the talk of one side to a controversy. Above all things, bear in mind that he who is friends with all is safe, no matter how affairs fall out."

"Sir," said I, "I will strive to follow your advice, and I am honored that you——"

"Tut, tut," he interrupted quickly, "y'are not honored. Y'are a good lad, and loyal. 'Tis scant enough. I wish now I had encouraged ye to go up to Court, but I disliked always to have your father's son consorting with the Hanoverian's rabble."

This time, I noticed, he did not glance at the door.

"I would not have you regret it, my lord," I said. "I have never desired to fawn upon the Elector."

A smile wrinkled his face.

"Odsfish, the lad has all the cant at his tongue's end!" he exclaimed. "You seem

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well enough trained for the court y'are bound for."

He became suddenly serious again.

"Look ye, Frank," he went on, "there should be one about the Prince named Sheridan. Stay, what was he called? Ah, yes—Sir Thomas—Sir Thomas Sheridan, an Irish baronet, close to mine own age. He has been tutor to the Prince since Charles left the nursery. The Chevalier St. George—God bless him—always trusted the man. I knew him once, and he must have had knowledge of your father.

"Say to him that I commended you to him, and that you are Dick Chisholm's son, Dick Chisholm of Dillon's Regiment in the Irish Brigade. There must be some of the Wild-geese in the Prince's train, and they would recognize you by your face—'tis like enough Dick's to be his own come out of the coffin."

He looked away from me, as if the words brought some memory to him, and we both stared into the flames that crackled on the hearth. When our eyes met again his were strangely bright.

"Your father's son!" he said. "God send you be so, Frank. I would not ask more. Well, 'tis time you were off. Bid Dawson saddle Black Betty."

"Black Betty!"

My heart jumped with gladness. There was no horse in Suffolk—aye, or in half a dozen shires that equaled her. She was my uncle's pet and pride, all but a daughter to him.

"Black Betty, I said," he repeated. "If I had any better, lad, you should have it. Now, open me the drawer in that secretary. So, unlock the box."

It was full of clinking golden guineas.

"There should be a leathern belt, too. Yes, that is it. Fill me the belt."

I obeyed him.

"That is to be worn next the skin," he said, when I had fastened down the laps over the pouches that held the gold. "Fill also your pockets, and keep the belt for a last resource. If ill-luck comes to you, a secret store of gold may stand between a man and death."

"Yes," I answered, dumfounded by a generosity I had never expected. My uncle had been uniformly kind to me, even though crusty in his general mood; but I had feared that my determination to join Prince Charles would arouse his ardent opposition, and I had steeled myself for threats of disinheritance, not princely bounty.

His brows puckered in thought.

"Ye have a sword?"

I unsheathed the blade.

"'Tis that you gave me last Christmas, sir."

"Good enough for a campaign. But pistols. Aye, I know ye have horse-pistols. They are well enough for mounted work. Ye require neater tools for other purposes. Open me that second drawer. There, take those. No better have been made."

I believed him. They were so small as to fit into my breeches pockets, so nicely balanced that their muzzles fell to a hair-line as deftly as one's pointed finger.

I tried to thank him, but he would hear none of it.

"Will ye take a servant?"

"I had not thought of it. It seemed to me that I should attract less attention alone, and——"

"That was well conceived. Indeed, Frank, y'are better off alone. Our men may be faithful, but 'tis advisable to cut loose from local gossip in embarking upon so perilous a venture. Art lacking in aught else, lad?"

"No, sir. I can think only of your kindness."

"'Tis no kindness. Now, be off with you. A swift resolution wants swift action. Moreover," this last was barbed with sarcasm, "ye must be sure of a good place in the triumphal procession up Whitehall."

"A good place, either in victory or defeat—I care not which," I cried. "So be it that I may strike some blows for the good cause."

"Y'are right, Frank," he answered. "A pretty sentiment—and a pretty fellow. I begin to learn things about ye I had not suspected. Ring for wine—and water."

When the Madeira was brought, with a goblet of water, my uncle poured out two glasses.

"To the king!" he said, and swept his glass across the goblet.

"To the king!" I echoed him, and followed suit.

"And good luck to you, Frank," he added.

"I hope so, sir," I said, and I felt more sober than I had yet.

"Help me to the window," he directed.

I gave him my arm and he limped across

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the room, cursing under his breath as his gouty foot twinged him.

After I had settled him, he reached up and patted my shoulder.

"Ride out by the North Drive, Frank," he said. "So I shall see you longest!"

"Good-by, sir," I said dully.

"Say not 'good-by'," he answered, wincing, "'tis a word dreaded by the old."

I gripped his hand, and left him, the good old man, tears welling in his kind eyes that once had seemed almost hard to me. As I rode down the North Drive, I turned in my saddle and waved to him and caught a brief glimpse of his face framed in the window-pane. A hundred yards on I turned again, and could see nothing. Already, it seemed, we were separated as completely as if a hundred miles intervened.

But in fifteen minutes I had forgotten him—so resilient is youth. And here was I, Francis Chisholm, of Chisholm Castle in Suffolk, twenty-two years of age, with a sword at my side, a splendid horse under me, and ahead the glorious adventure of riding across hostile England to join the gallant little army with which Prince Charles Edward Stuart was seeking to recover for his father, whom some men called the Old Pretender and some King James III. of England, Ireland, Scotland and France, the throne which the Hanoverian Elector, who reigned as George the First in London, had stolen from him.

What mattered it to me that a chill wind blew in my face, that occasional drops of rain flickered out of the damp mist? The grayness of an early November day served only to frame the more clearly the pictures of glory that beckoned me on along the highway.

CHAPTER II

ADVENTURE COURTS ME

THAT first night I lay at the Golden Crown in St. Neots. With morning I was early ahorse and pushed on for Wandsford by the North Road. Now I began to meet rumors and talk of the Prince's doings. But it was evident to any man of sense that the great bulk of the tales were sheer invention. According to one loud-mouthed fellow, he was heading twenty thousand wild Highland caterans, devastating the country as he advanced. A woman swore to me that she had certain intelligence the invaders ate babes of succulent age. I put all such tales to one side, and sought only for news of the Prince's whereabouts, careful, however, never to seem curious.

The weather had improved overnight, and I made good time in the crisp, cold air. In Wandsford I was recommended to the Green Dragon kept by Master Peter Naylor, and here again I found my golden guineas a sure passport to swift service and attendance. After I had seen to Black Betty's bedding and watched the hostlers rub down her sheeny limbs, I took my supper luxuriously in the tap-room, reveling in the warmth of the open fire, the hum of voices, the bustle of servants, all the sights and sounds and smells that were to me the embodiment of my new-found freedom.

To me, then, as I basked contentedly—nay, self-contentedly—my legs stretched out beneath the table, a tall mug of home-brewed by my elbow and a pipe of black Virginia in my hand, came Master Naylor, a Boniface of Bonifaces, rubbing his hands together, unctuously solicitous for my comfort.

"And you ride north, Mr. Chisholm?" he asked.

I told him yes. He wagged his head.

"You must have important affairs, young sir, to urge you on such a perilous road. There is but one other gentleman here tonight who rides north. All my patrons are hurrying south—anywhere to escape the—" he tarried and eyed me slyly, seeking to judge my party; but I gave him no satisfaction—"the Scotch," he compromised finally.

"I have yet to find the man will do me harm, so be it I mind mine own affairs," I told him.

"Excellently put," he applauded. "And yet—if I might make bold, sir?"

I nodded.

"The countryside is most unsettled. Such times are not good for public order. When the king is defied the gentlemen of the road ply their trade unhindered."

"That is to be believed," I admitted. "But uncertainty, mine host, is the spice of life."

"For young gentlemen, mayhap," he smiled. "But I ha' warned you, sir. Take heed your pistols are loaded."

"I will that," said I, "and thank you for your advice, which was kindly meant."

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He was for leaving me then, but I checked him.

"Stay," I said, "which is the gentleman who is also for the North Road?"

"Across the room—the table next the bar."

He indicated a young fellow of about my age, dark and well-favored, clothed modishly in a plain plum-colored riding-suit.

"I have never had the honor of meeting the gentleman before," added Master Naylor, "but I would gladly present you to him."

"Nay, nay," I said. "I would not think of troubling you. 'Twas but idle inquisitiveness. Or better, mayhap," I went on more lightly, "I do not wish to confound a traveling companion with one of those knights of the road you have warned me of."

Chuckling merrily over what he considered a brave joke, Master Naylor departed, and I finished my ale and went off to bed.

Next morning, as I mounted Black Betty in the inn-yard, I noticed the youth Master Naylor had pointed out as my traveling companion also undertaking the final arrangements for departure. He rode through the gate at my heels, but his nag was no match for mine and I soon left him behind.

At Wandsford I turned westward into a lonely track that led to Morcott and on by way of Allerton and Bellesden to Leicester. This was very different from the North Road. Occasionally, I met a farmer or a heavy wagon lumbering into Wandsford with market produce. But for the most part I rode alone. Houses were rare, and in many places the way led through dark woods. Involuntarily, I felt in my pockets to make sure of the small pistols my uncle had given me and examined the priming.

It must have been shortly before noon, as I was emerging from one of these gloomy woods, that I spied a man riding across the fields toward the road, taking the fences, hedges and ditches as easily as a fox-hunter. I supposed him at first to be some squire or game-keeper about his own business, but presently he leaped a fence into the road and reined in at my elbow.

A side-glance showed me a face grim and forbidding, blotched by over-much wine-bibbing, and disconcertingly reckless. One of his eyes had a slight squint that was most sinister.

"Where are you riding, young sir?" he asked in a harsh voice.

"To Leicester," I told him.

"You have a good horse," he continued, and as he spoke, I felt, rather than saw, that he was trying to hold his mount behind mine. So I reined back Black Betty, and held her fairly abreast him.

"Why, so I have been told," I said.

"Have you been long on the road?" he pressed, and all the time his eyes roved hither and yon as if on the watch for some one he did not wish to see.

"A few days," I answered.

We topped a low rise, and a second time he sought to drop behind me. But I was ready for him, and put one hand carelessly in my pocket by way of warning that I was prepared.

"What do they talk of in London?" he asked suddenly.

"I am not from London."

"You are not from this shire, sir?"

"I am of Suffolk."

Stealthily he pulled his mount back an inch or two, but again I was ready for him.

"Your horse does not go well in company," I suggested.

"'Tis a restless beast," he agreed. "Aye, 'tis not companionable."

We rode as much as five minutes in silence, I should judge.

"Ye will ha' lain at the Green Dragon in Wandsford, I dare swear," he said at last.

"Yes."

"Master Naylor is a talkative host. Had he any news of affairs?"

"He told me the gentlemen of the road were busy in these parts," I shot at a venture.

My companion's mouth tightened perceptibly.

"Aye, there be such abroad," he agreed. "Hard times make hard men, young sir."

"So I have been told."

Then there came to us on the slight breeze the far-off drumming of hoofs on the earthen road. My companion reined in sharply——so sharply as to jerk his horse onto its haunches.

"Heard you aught?" he asked.

"I hear a galloping horse," I replied.

He glanced at me sharply, seemed on the point of saying something and then with a curt nod faced his horse about, put it to the roadside hedge and took the obstacle at a single bound. Without a word he was gone. The last I saw of him was as he rounded the shoulder of a low hill and disappeared in the direction of a thick copse beyond.

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BEHIND me the galloping hoofs sounded louder and louder. Here was a pretty pickle. I was quit of one doubtful character, but I had every reason to fear whoever came after him at such a pace. If it was more of his kind, I wanted none of them. If it was officers of the law, they might see suspicion in my chance meeting with him. And I could not afford to fall foul of the law on such a journey as I had undertaken.

I made the best of a bad job, and rode on as if I had not a care in the world. Only when the galloping horseman was on the point of overtaking me did I turn to look at him. 'Twas the young man who had set out with me from Wandsford.

He drew rein at my crupper.

"Thank God, sir, I see you safe!" he exclaimed.

"Why, what ado is this?" I answered.

"Know you the person who was riding with you some few minutes since?" he inquired.

"Nought, save that he looked to be a great rogue," I retorted.

"You say truth, sir," affirmed the young man. "That was Captain Kingston."

"I regret the name means nothing to me," I replied.

"He is one of the best-known highwaymen in these parts," explained my new companion.

A thrill went through me. Here was adventure, indeed. Already, I had met and outfaced a desperate knight of the road.

"Sir," said I, "I suspected as much, and I will not conceal from you my uneasiness when the fellow showed his disposition to stick tome. May I ask how you knew him?"

"Why, that's a fair question," said my companion. "I was riding some distance behind you when I saw you top a hill in company with one I was certain had not started from Wandsford with you. Then I encountered a farm lad in great trepidation, who told me he had just seen Captain Kingston riding this way, evidently in pursuit of a gentleman, and warned me I had best turn in my tracks."

"So you came on?"

"So I came on," he said simply.

"Sir," said I, extending my hand, "that was bravely done. I owe you more than thanks. Had the fellow attempted mischief I was ready for him, but your conduct saved me from any mischance."

"'Twas naught," countered my companion. "To say truth, I should rather have liked a fight—save that I am riding in some haste, and 'twould ill have suited me to stop for legal parleys over a dead highwayman."

"Such is my case, sir," I answered. "In the circumstances, would it fall in with your plans if we kept company on the road?"

He hesitated.

"My name," I continued, "is Francis Chisholm, of Chisholm Castle, in Suffolk. If my suggestion was ill-timed——"

"I shall be glad to ride with you," he said, with quick warmth. "My name is Robert Sawtelle, and I am from the North Country. I have been visiting in London, and now I go to visit friends in Derby."

I eyed him narrowly. It was in my mind that perhaps his errand was the same as mine, but I recalled my uncle's caution as to silence and held my tongue.

"I ride that way, myself," was all I answered him.

We rode together the rest of the day and lay that night at the Pelican Inn in Leicester High Street. Sawtelle, I found, had traveled much for his years, and he made me envious with his stories of the Grand Tour and of Leyden University, where he had been a student for a year. The Court at London he knew, too, but of politics we spoke never a word.

In Leicester we got positive news that Prince Charles was at Derby. He had proclaimed his father there that morning, a sweating courier told us in the inn-yard, and all night long a caravan of refugees from Derby and the country round rumbled by our windows, fleeing before the Highlanders, whose ferocity was on everybody's lips.

"Shall you continue?" Sawtelle asked me, when we met in the morning.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I can not believe that harm will come to one who gives no cause for offense," I said.

He agreed.

"Moreover," he suggested, "if we do see the rebel army 'twill be something to tell our friends about and remember afterward."

As we rode along the Derby highway in a drizzling rain, I thought often of his use of that word "rebel" and congratulated myself that I had held my tongue.

It was just turning dusk when we entered Derby from the south. Our first sign of hostile arms was a picket of Highlanders

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encamped by the road a mile or so outside the city. They eyed us sullenly, but let us pass without question. For myself, I admit they stirred me deeply. Tall, sinewy, dark-complexioned, each with target, or round shield, slung at his back, claymore and dirk at his belt and musket over his shoulder, these were the men who had triumphed at Gladsmuir, who had killed or captured practically all of Sir John Cope's army and had hurled the Usurper out of Scotland.

I had heard along the road much talk of their unkemptness. They were not neat, to be sure, nor did they look like English regulars; but their plaids, kilts and tartans gave them a certain uniformity of dress that was delightfully picturesque. When they left their native hills, many of them had been barefooted, most of them were only half-armed. But now they were clothed and equipped, and they had won this spoil in fair fight from the Hanoverian's troops.

"Brave-looking fellows," I said to Sawtelle as we passed the picket.

"Aye," he said briefly.

"The town seems orderly."

"So I see," he assented.

In fact, we had scarcely entered the High Street when we were shown how credulous must have been the country people who spread tales of the Highlanders' disorder. There were hundreds of them standing about, all armed; but there was less loud talking than would be heard at a county-fair day.

In some of the houses that we passed we saw the men billeted in them helping their hostesses to wash the dishes or prepare supper. The one disturbance that we noticed was in front of a cutler's shop. This place was being stormed by a shouting, singing, laughing mob of Highlanders, all waving swords and dirks.

"What is toward?" I asked a townsman who moved unfearing through the press.

He laughed.

"Why, sir," he said, "these Highland men be like childern. They do be all scrambling to see which shall sharpen his sword first for the fight they say they will 'ave tomorrow wi' Ligonier and his army."

"Is Prince Charles here?"

"Aye. He stays at the town 'ouse o' the Earl o' Exeter."

I thanked him and rode on to overtake Sawtelle. He was waiting for me on the edge of the market-place, and right in front of us loomed a big placard that I knew would have pleased my uncle's heart:

James III.
By the Grace of God
of
England, Ireland, France and Scotland,
King, etc., etc.

Sawtelle regarded it with a blink that did not spell Stuart devotion.

"I am afraid we must part here, Mr. Chisholm," he said.

"That is bad news," I told him. "Shall we meet again?"

"Like enough," he said with a smile, and his voice that had been cold took on friendly warmth again. "These be strange times we live in, and strange things come to pass. Who would have thought we two, who lay one night at the Green Dragon in Wandsford, never having spoken to each other, should become friends on the open road a few short hours later?"

"The debt is on my side," I said. "'Tis for me to pay it—and I will, if opportunity serves."

"Trouble not. Give you good even, Mr. Chisholm."

"Good even, Mr. Sawtelle."

He bowed in his saddle, and so we parted.

I rode onward through the dusk across Derby market-place.

CHAPTER III

I QUARREL WITH A LADY

AT THE crossing beyond the market-place I realized that I was wholly at sea in the huddled tangle of Derby's narrow streets. So, as was but natural, I hailed the first person I chanced to see, a slim Highland lad, who strode along in his plaid as if the town belonged to him.

"Stay a moment, good boy," I called.

He seemed not to hear me.

"Are you deaf, my lad?" I called again.

Still he strode on. This was too much to warrant forbearance, and pushing my horse up on the footway to the youngster's side, I reached down to grasp his shoulder, when a sudden doubt assailed me.

"Have you the English?" I asked, keeping my hands off him, yet crowding my

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horse in front of him so that he had to back up against the wall.

With that he found his tongue. He swung around on me, one hand on the hilt of his claymore, the other gripping a dirk, and his eyes glowed like molten fire, as he snapped—

"Yes."

His voice was thin and strangely sweet, despite the venom that o'ercoated it, but it was his face that struck me most. It was of an exquisite oval contour, with great, black-lashed gray eyes that were now dark with hatred and maybe fear, and he had blue-black hair that glinted even in the scant light that came from a window above us. In stature he was slightly, but compactly, made, with a fine, easy carriage. I judged him to be not more than eighteen, if so much.

He was such a fair-seeing youth that my anger boiled away. But even so I could not altogether curb my resentment at his churlishness.

"If you understood me, then, why did you not answer?" I retorted.

"I will not be your 'good boy' nor your 'lad,' " he said curtly. "I am not liking your method of address, sir."

The blood dyed my face to the roots of my hair. The shame of it—and from such a whipper-snapper!

"You are over-young, sir," I said in a voice that trembled with rage. "If your estimate of yourself is founded upon reason, however, you must be of sufficiently high station to know that even a man of your youth can not comment freely upon another gentleman's manners."

"I will be a chief," said the boy proudly. "And I say what I please—when it is the truth."

"If you say much more in this vein, you are like to get a whipping," I replied between gritted teeth. "Don't think for a minute that I would waste good steel on a cub. It will be my riding-whip or——"

He shuddered and shrank back against the house wall.

"Are you a coward into the bargain?" I asked sarcastically. "If you fear a whipping, why risk it? Common civility is enough protection, my lad."

Those wonderful gray eyes blazed at me through the dark, and I heard the slither of his dirk as it ripped from the sheath. In a second he was on me, and had I not by accident gripped his wrist he would have stabbed me in the thigh.

"Steady, Betty," I told my mare, as she sidestepped gingerly under this onslaught. "You young devil!"

His wrist was unbelievably slender, but muscular, and he put his whole body into his effort, while I had but one arm to spare. For a minute or two I thought he would get away. Then without any warning he crumpled up and hung limp from my grasp.

"Stand, boy," I panted. "Can't you——"

"You are hurting me," he said very low.

"And I thought you had mettle!" I growled contemptuously. "You are all words and no backbone, 'twould seem. 'Tis a bad combination in one so young."

"You twisted my arm," he answered.

And there was something so reproachful in his manner that I began to feel almost ashamed of myself.

"Well, 'twas none of my making, this broil," I blustered. "If I give you back your dirk, will you promise not to knife me when my back is turned?"

There was a silence.

"Well?" I asked impatiently. "I stopped, my young friend, to gather some information. As you don't seem disposed to help me, I must seek elsewhere for it."

"I—promise," he said with a catch in his voice.

I was ever a soft-hearted man, and this boy's collapse affected me deeply.

"If I hurt you, 'twas not intentionally," I began. "I am sorry, lad. But you were needlessly churlish, and had you been brought up in England you would know that such manners are not highly esteemed. In addressing you as I did, I had no thought——"

A door opened across the street, and a man called something in Gaelic. The boy at my side answered in a thin, reedy soprano. The door slammed, and I heard footsteps running toward us. I dived down and secured a firm grip on my young Highlander's shoulder, intending to hold him for a hostage, and with my bridle-hand fumbled for a pistol. There was no room for sword-play in that cramped alley, and I knew not what sort of attack to expect.

But to my surprise the mastery of the situation was assumed by my captive.

"Do not be hitting at the Englishman,

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David," he called. "He means no harm, I think."

"Aye, but is he to let ye gang free?" said the man called David, as he stepped up beside us.

Dimly I descried him for a tall, brawny, young Scotchman, standing with claymore drawn.

"Are ye haudin' our young leddy?" he asked me fiercely.

"Young lady!" I exclaimed. "Where's the young lady?"

With that I felt the shoulder under my hand shake with something I suspected to be laughter.

David stepped up closer and stared at me with bleak displeasure.

"I dinna ken wha ye may be, sir, but ye hae put yoursel' at the claymore's point wi' the MacRosses. Ye maun answer to me for this."

"For what?" said I. "For threatening to whip an impudent boy?" David gasped.

"Ye'll hae did that?" he asked.

"Certainly." My temper was beginning to rise. "What of it, man?"

He drew a deep breath.

"We'll fecht richt noo."

But again my captive intervened.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, David," he ordered. "I forbid it. You are too good a warrior to wish to fight in the dark in a narrow street. Wait until morning. I am sure the Englishman will agree."

"I'll agree," said I, "but I should like to know first what I am fighting about."

"Mon, ye maun be a blitherin' natural," said David pityingly. "Dinna ye ken the young leddy will be the——"

"What young lady?" I shouted.

"Wha but the young leddy beside ye?"

I looked down at my captive.

"Are you a woman?" I said blankly.

"Yes," he—I mean she—answered.

And the gray eyes surveyed me quizzically for a flitting second before their long lashes veiled them.

I saw that my hand was still clutching her shoulder, and I snatched it away as if it might be burnt.

"I—I—beg your pardon," I said stupidly.

There really seemed nothing else to say.

"I—you must understand—had I understood—that is, my apologies are—" I floundered along, hunting for any graceful avenue of escape. But she would not help me, and I could not blame her.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I blurted out at last.

"You didn't ask me," she replied, and once more the gray eyes swept my face in mocking appraisal.

"At the least," I said stiffly, "I will give your friend such satisfaction as I may tomorrow."

David—and he was a very big David—leaning on his sword, seemed gloomily appreciative of my attitude.

"Ye'll no be o' the army?" he asked.

"I am but come tonight to join."

"I thocht as much. None but a stranger and an Englishman wadnae hae kenned The MacRoss."

"Are you—The MacRoss?" I inquired of my former captive.

"I am," she returned coolly, as one would say: "What's that to you?"

"I only asked," I went on, "because I was doubtful how to bid you good night, madam. Does one say 'Miss' or——"

"I am Miss MacRoss, sir."

"Good even to you, Miss MacRoss, and again—my apologies. Sir," I turned to David, "I know only your first name."

"Ye may ca' me MacRoss," he said briefly.

"Ah, a brother?"

"Nae, sir, a servant."

"A gentleman of my clan," amended Miss MacRoss.

WITH that we parted, and I had ridden a quarter-mile before I remembered that gray eyes and blue-black hair, in tartan kilts and plaids, were not my errand that night. Fortunately, several corners on I met the town bell-man setting out upon his rounds—so hidebound is convention even in times of public disturbance—and he directed me to the Earl of Exeter's house, where, he informed me, the Prince was just convening a council of war.

"And they do say, sir," he declared plethorically, "there will be a great battle the morrow. The Juke o' Cumberland and General Ligonier and thirty thousand men are marchin' upon 'is Royal 'Ighness, and the 'Ighland men are bleedin' anxious to get at their throats. Oh, sir, I do 'ope as they won't fight in Derby town. 'Twould be 'orrid to see the cannon-balls a-rollin' over the market-place and blood drippin' on our doorsteps. Yes, sir, thank'y, sir.

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The third turnin' and then to your left. Give you good even, sir."

The Prince's headquarters were brightly lighted. A detachment of Highlanders and Life Guards were on duty, and a sentinel asked me my business. He passed me on to a sergeant, who, in turn called in an officer.

"My Lord Elcho is captain of the guard," said the cornet, "and he is closeted with the Prince. I know not what to do about you, sir. Have you acquaintance with any of his Royal Highness's suite?"

I bethought me, then, of my uncle's friend, Sir Thomas Sheridan.

"Yes," said the cornet instantly, "he is within. He is the Prince's chief adviser," he added doubtfully. "Do you know him?"

"Say to him that Mr. Francis Chisholm, nephew of Lord Chisholm, is waiting upon him," I directed, with more confidence than I really felt.

"Very well, sir. Until I return, you may sit here."

He ushered me into a small ante-room off the entrance hall. Here I passed an anxious five minutes, until the silence was broken by voices and approaching footsteps.

The man who entered to me was close on fifty, erect and somewhat portly, with a ruddy face, marred a trifle by a sneering self-sufficiency.

"I am Sir Thomas Sheridan," he said in a mellow voice, with just a touch of Irish brogue. "Did you have business with me, young sir?"

"I am Lord Chisholm's nephew," I said. "I think you once had acquaintance with him. My father, too, you must have known—Captain Chisholm of Dillon's Regiment."

"So," remarked Sheridan with a quaint foreign twist. "Yes, I know both of the names you mention. Your father I knew especially well, Mr. Chisholm. You favor him, do you not?"

"I believe so."

"And what is your errand?"

"I am come to join Prince Charles, sir," I said, trying to speak as calmly as possible.

Sir Thomas's face lightened up.

"Egad, this is good news," he cried. "You bring a message from Lord Chisholm?"

"Not exactly—that is——"

He checked the explanation I would have made. I could see some plan had developed in his brain.

"I will take you straight in to the Prince," he said. "He will be glad to receive you, Mr. Chisholm. Every new sword counts in a venture like ours, you know."

He led me out into the hall and with his hand under my arm escorted me down a long corridor, talking all the time.

"When I first saw you, I was suspicious," he chuckled. "You looked so English standing there. And as yet, Mr. Chisholm, we have got more hard knocks than handshakes in England. Your people are —— hard to convince. But you're the image of Dick Chisholm. He was the only Englishman ever commissioned in the Irish Brigade—in my time, anyway. They worshiped him in Dillon's. He was born the wrong side of St. George's Channel, worse luck. He was all that an Englishman ought to be and an Irishman isn't—a great combination of the two races. Well, and here we are."

He opened a door and shut it behind us—I caught a glimpse of a Highlander in full war panoply standing guard outside—and I found myself blinking in the light of a score of candles. About a table sat a dozen men, some of them in riding-suits, but the majority wearing the tartan and kilts.

I batted my eyes at them and they all stared back at me with interest.

"Who have we here, Sheridan?" asked a clear, incisive voice.

The man who had spoken sat at the head of the table. He was some two or three years older than myself, rather thick-set, with a swarthy face and thick lips and a look about him that I can not describe in words. It made him distinguished in that gathering of men, many of whom physically and intellectually were his superiors. I knew without being told that I confronted the hope of the Stuart cause, Prince Charles Edward, rightful Prince of Wales and by appointment of his august father, King James III, Prince Regent of the three kingdoms.

CHAPTER IV

I MAKE FRIENDS WITH A PRINCE

"A RECRUIT, your Royal Highness!" cried Sheridan. "Here is a recruit worth while. Sir, permit me to present Mr. Francis Chisholm, nephew of Lord Chisholm of Stradbrooke in Suffolk. His father was Captain Dick Chisholm of Dil-

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lon's Regiment, whom I doubt not your Royal Highness has heard us oldsters speak of in the past. Mr. Chisholm has a message of hope for us, I believe."

There was a huge stir in the room at Sheridan's words. Men whispered rapidly to each other behind their hands. The Prince's eyes lighted up and he rose to his feet with hand outstretched. As for me, as I sank on one knee to kiss it, my heart pounding with excitement and trying hard to believe that the minute I had long hoped for really was arrived, I was thinking desperately what reason Sir Thomas could have had for his last words.

I had said nothing about a message. He had jumped at the conclusion, himself, and then cut me off when— But the Prince was speaking, and I must drop my speculations and pay attention.

" 'Sblood, but you are welcome, Mr. Chisholm," he exclaimed with more than ordinary cordiality. "As much for yourself, sir, as because you are the first unforeseen recruit who has joined us."

I began to see a light.

"I trust you left Lord Chisholm in good health," he continued. "Will he follow you?"

Before I could answer, Sheridan intervened.

"I am afraid that Lord Chisholm is too far along in years to lend us active assistance in the field, your Royal Highness. Am I right, Mr. Chisholm?"

"Yes, sir."

"No matter," said Prince Charles kindly. "He did well to send us so likely a substitute as yourself. Gentlemen," he addressed himself to the attentive group around the table, "I hope Mr. Chisholm's coming at this auspicious moment will convince those of you who doubt that we do not lack loyal supporters in our realm of England. What say you, Lord George?"

The man he addressed was all of fifty, but as splendid a figure as I ever hope to see, tall, commanding in presence, with a fierce, aggressive face and a certain high honesty of expression. I knew he could be none other than Lord George Murray, the commander of the Prince's army and the general who had baffled every English officer who had been sent against him.

He sat unmoved during the Prince's speech, but now he let his eyes dwell upon me.

"I say, your Royal Highness," he answered slowly, "that much depends upon Mr. Chisholm's message, the tidings he brings us from the south. I have no desire to detract from the devotion he has shown by joining us at this time, but I would point out to you that he is but one recruit, and however important his family may be, here in England, as we have cause to know, gentlemen of family no longer can summon vassals into the field with them, as can our Scottish chieftains."

There was a murmur of approval at this, and the Prince flushed.

"You seem set against any further adventure," he said petulantly. "Why is this so, Lord George? You were among the first of those who wished to cross the border."

"Aye, sir," said Lord George steadily, "but I would have your Royal Highness remember that in those days you had assurance of aid in England, which has not materialized."

"But here is Mr. Chisholm to prove that aid is coming to us," cried the Prince. "Come, Mr. Chisholm, tell us how speeds our cause?"

I hesitated. This was a situation I had never bargained on. What could I say? If I took one point of view I could see I would offend a powerful party of the generals and leaders. On the other hand, if I rendered a verdict for them, I might prejudice myself with the Prince. Seeing me hesitate, Lord George generously came to my assistance.

"Perhaps, sir," he said to the Prince, " 'twould be no more than fair to place before Mr. Chisholm the question we have been debating. His information can not help but be valuable to us at this juncture."

"Very well," said the Prince a trifle impatiently.

Lord George bowed and turned to me.

"You must know, Mr. Chisholm," he began, "that here we have marched into England to Derby, within one hundred and twenty-seven miles of London, beating or out-maneuvering every obstacle the Hanoverian Elector's forces have put in our path; but in all this time we have received no valuable accessions to our ranks as was promised us by our friends in England before we set forth.

"There are no more than six thousand of us, mostly Scots. We have no doubt about

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beating the Duke of Cumberland, if he comes against us as he threatens, but the question is what could we do after sustaining the necessary losses in such a combat? For there would still be the army covering London on Finchley Common.

"His Royal Highness thinks that we should march straight upon London, relying upon defeating any force which opposes us, and seize the capital at all hazards, confident that the English Jacobites will rally to us as soon as we have struck another blow. But we Scots feel that the risk is too great. If we lose now, we lose all. We are not assured of the support we expected, and we are surrounded on every side by armies immeasurably superior in point of numbers.

"Once defeated, we could never cut our way north, and with us would die the Stuart cause. We deem it best to retire to Scotland, where our hold is certain, and await a more favorable opportunity to strike at London. Now, what I would have from you is whether or no there is chance of any immediate reinforcements for us from your English gentry."

He stopped expectantly, and I could see that every eye in the room was glued upon my face. Beside me, Sir Thomas Sheridan wheezed heavily.

" 'Tis manifest, Mr. Chisholm," said he coaxingly, "that a bold policy would be safest for us. We hear that London is in a panic and the court all prepared to flee to Flanders."

I looked at him, and then at Lord George and the Prince. And in a flash it came to me that the only thing to do was to tell the truth. It might be that the fate of the army would hinge upon my words, and I cared not to have men's lives against my conscience.

" 'Twas my uncle's opinion, my lord," I found myself saying, "that the Jacobites of England would hang back from active participation in the rising so long as there was chance of the French being brought in. We want King James to come home, but most of us dread the French in our midst even more than the Usurper. That is the sober truth. Everything I have seen in my ride hither confirms my uncle's judgment."

A look of triumph gleamed in Lord George's eyes, and I saw him glance meaningly at several men who sat by him. The Prince leaned forward in his chair, his face suddenly gone white and drawn.

"I would not have you mold your opinion to suit my whim, Mr. Chisholm," he said earnestly, "but this matter is of surpassing importance to me. I have a feeling—I can not analyze it; I can not give reasons for it—but I have a conviction that I must put my fate to the touch here and now. Without reasons to back up my statement, I am convinced that if we press ahead tomorrow, London will be ours and all England with it. The regular troops do not live that can stand against my Highlanders."

A mutter of approval came from the Highland chiefs. "I have been uniformly successful up to now. It would be both unlucky and bad policy for us to retire at this moment, when we are at the apex of achievement. 'Twould, I am assured, shake our cause and put us back for months, at the best. What you say about the French may be true.

"I dread to think of employing aliens against my own subjects, and I defy any of my enemies to say that Charles Stuart has not used the most jealous care in safeguarding the lives of all those who have crossed his path—aye, even those brought in arms against me. But Mr. Chisholm, for the very reason that I do not wish to rely upon French assistance, I desire to press on now and win victory unaided, so that the taunt might never be brought against us that without foreign aid we might not have succeeded.

"Think, again, Mr. Chisholm. Our cause is not so black as you have painted it. There must be hundreds of loyal gentlemen like yourself, ready and anxious to draw the sword for the white cockade, and brave fellows who will gladly follow them in battle."

WHAT I would have answered I do not know. I think that I would have succumbed to the persuasive earnestness, the deadly intensity of purpose, which animated the Prince's whole being. With all his failings—and in after days I was to come to know them all too well—there were the makings of greatness in Prince Charles. But I was saved the decision. Even as I opened my lips to speak the door flung open behind me and a muddied figure strode up to the table.

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"Mr. MacLauchlan!" exclaimed the Prince.

"That verra same," returned the figure, pulling off his gauntlets. "Hoots, your Royal Highness, 'tis nae weather at all for ridin'—wi' the English everywhere on the lookout for my kind. But I hae won through—and I bring brave news!"

"News!" The word ran round the table.

"What is it?" asked the Prince.

"Laird John Drummon' landed not twa weeks syne, wi' the Royal Scots, Fitz-James's Regiment of horse and six pickets of the Irish Brigade. He brocht worrd that the whole Irish Brigade were embarked at Dunkirk, and a braw French army wi' them, all ready and waitin' wind and tide to sail. He'll be at Perth the noo, wi' twa thousand Highlanders, awaitin' to join ye."

"Glorious!" cried the Prince.

It seemed to me he was over-ready to forget his recent words about French assistance, but I could not find it in my heart to blame him. Any help was great help in a cause such as his.

"Why does not Lord John march to join us?" asked Lord George Murray.

"Aweel," said MacLauchlan, "there's a bit Lowland army, mostly Glasga' men, wi' some Regulars, at Stirling, and the Laird President Forbes is raisin' the Western Whig clans at Inverness. Laird John daurna leave them free in Scotland."

Lord George nodded.

"It looks to me, your Royal Highness," he said to the Prince, "as if fate had taken the decision out of our hands. It is clearly impossible for Lord John to join us—we could not afford to wait for him, even if it would be feasible for him to leave Scotland. Obviously, it is to our advantage to retreat and join forces with him. By that time the French succors should have landed, and we will be able to best any force the Hanoverian can bring against us."

Prince Charles drummed slowly on the arm of his chair. His eyes had a far-away look, and the drawn expression I had marked before was still on his face.

"Aye, you have the right of me, Lord George," he said with dry precision—like a child repeating unwillingly a hard-learned lesson. "There can be no logical doubt what is best to be done. And yet——"

He paused and all in the room looked fixedly at him.

"And yet," he repeated, softly, "I do not like it."

Followed then an interval punctuated by men's breathing.

"'Twill make sad reading for my father," he added.

I felt strangely sorry for him. It was as if a boy had been denied something he had set his heart upon.

"Will you make arrangements for the retreat, my lord?" he said to Lord George, rousing himself with an effort. "We should leave before daybreak, before the enemy have wind of our plans. And what has transpired here must be kept secret. We shall have an English army behind us, another on our flank and a third ahead, and 'twill be necessary to march smartly, if we would get off unscathed."

Lord George bowed silent assent, and with a scraping of chairs the council broke up. I stood back to let several men pass from the room, and the movement caught the Prince's eye. He had risen too, and now he came toward me, dropping his arm on my shoulder as though we were just two lads of the same age.

"I had all but forgotten you, Mr. Chisholm, although your coming turned out to be an important issue of the evening," he said. "Forgive me. I am over-much harassed with weighty matters, as you may see. What would you do? You have joined us at a moment when we seem to be checked in the high tide of victory. It may be that dark days are ahead. There is no reason why you should not withdraw, if you wish. We shall be leaving England, I know not for how long, and you must go into lonely exile if you share our portion."

"Nay, your Royal Highness, my mind was made up before I rode hither," I answered doggedly. "For better or worse, I fight in the Stuart cause. And I would have you know that I think it ill becomes the Jacobites of England, after inviting you to make the venture, to sit idle and leave the fighting for a handful of Scots. Come what will, I am your man."

He caught me by both shoulders and held me off at arm's-length, whilst he looked me in the eye.

"That was well spoken, Mr. Chisholm," he said. "Man, you have made up for the blow that caught me this night. You came in a good hour, sir—for me, and I

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hope, for yourself. Certes, you have laid Charles Stuart in your debt."

He led me back to the table, and filled a couple of glasses with wine.

"I fear I have not been over-hospitable to you," he went on. "I like you, Mr. Chisholm. You are not afraid to speak out. You will make enemies that way, sir, but at least, you will not create distrust."

He spoke with an air of authority that seemed odd in a man of his years, but at the same time without self-consciousness or superiority. It was simply due, as I afterward found, to that painstaking training in the arts and principles of statecraft and the work of princes, which his father had given to him. His personal charm was uncanny. He had a way of making you feel quite at your ease, and at the same time aware that he himself was what he was.

"Believe me, your Royal Highness," I said, "'twas a wrench to my heart to disappoint you in aught that I said, but I would not have you find me insincere."

"A prince must always appreciate honesty, Mr. Chisholm," he replied gravely. "But this conversation gets us no closer to the object of our discussion. What am I to do with you?"

"Whatever pleases you, sir," I returned promptly.

"You would not get on with the Scots—not without experience," he said thoughtfully. "Moreover, they are jealous of being officered save by the gentry of their own clans. All the few English I have are formed into what we call the Manchester Regiment, but—what say you to joining my staff? I always have use for an extra aide-de-camp."

"Your Royal Highness is truly kind," I cried.

"Agreed, then," he responded, and lifted his glass high. "A toast, Mr. Chisholm! To our campaign together!"

We drank it enthusiastically, and then he conducted me into another apartment where several gentlemen were clustered about an open fire.

"You must meet your comrades of my staff," he said. "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Francis Chisholm, an Englishman who is not unwilling to become a Jacobite in arms. Mr. Chisholm, this is Mr. Nicholas Wogan——"

I looked with interest at the tall, dark man, with one arm—his other, I had heard, was lost at Fontenoy—who had fought in the Fifteen as a mere boy and was brother to that famous Charles Wogan, who kidnaped the Polish princess Clementina for King James from an Austrian fortress and then carried her safe across the frontier into Italy.

"—and my quartermaster-general, Mr. Sullivan," continued the Prince, introducing me to a typical Irishman, much like Sheridan. "And this is a really important gentleman, Mr. Chisholm—Mr. Murray of Broughton, my Secretary of State for Scotland."

Mr. Murray of Broughton gave me a limp, clammy hand to shake and looked at me without meeting my eye. He was a thin, rather tall man, with the manner of a scholar out of place among the group of soldiers about him. I disliked him instinctively from the first, and later was not surprised when—but I run ahead of my story.

"I would recommend you all to retire early," said the Prince, after the introductions had been concluded. "We make an early start in the morning. Mr. Chisholm, I will leave you to Mr. Wogan. He will find sleeping accommodations for you."

"What shift shall I make for a uniform, sir?" I asked doubtfully.

Prince Charles and the others laughed.

"A white cockade in your hat will be sufficient—that is all most of us can muster," he said merrily.

CHAPTER V

I MEET THE MASTER OF GAIRLOCH

"MR. CHISHOLM, the Prince's commands must be obeyed," quoth Wogan after the others had left us, "but in truth I know not where to place you. The house is over-small for the mob we have herded here. We must hunt up some vacant corner."

We hunted up-stairs and down, but without result. Whenever we opened a door, one or more blanketed figures would rise up from couch or floor and bellow curses for the intrusion upon their sleep.

"You see how it is," said my new friend. "I myself have only some six feet of planks reserved or——"

An idea struck me.

"There is a small ante-room by the entrance-door," I suggested. "Would that be occupied?"

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"The very thing!" he cried.

The cubby-hole—it was little more—was empty as when I had left it, and Wogan soon procured rugs and cushions to make a couch on the floor.

"Good preparation for a campaign," he said, when all was ready for me. "You may expect worse fare than this in Scotland—if we win safe across Esk. Well, Mr. Chisholm, I wish you pleasant dreams of your future adventures."

He bowed himself out, with that splendid courtesy which I learned to expect from the officers of the French king's service, and I found myself alone—for the first time since I had stepped out of this same tiny room a couple of hours before. How strange! What changes had been wrought in my destiny, in my whole outlook upon life, in everything that mattered or counted, in those few briefly ticking minutes!

I lay down, with my cloak wrapped around me, my pistols at my head and my sword beside me. But I did not sleep. Outside I heard the tramping of the guard. From afar came the faint calls of sentinels. A bagpipe, an instrument I had never heard before, blared fantastic music for some Highland soldiers who caroused late in their quarters. Other unaccustomed noises came to me.

I began to think—of my peaceful life at Chisholm Castle, of my uncle and his parting words, of my ride through the Midland roads, of that hauntingly pretty face that had looked up at me in the Derby streets this very night—and the pretty pickle my treatment of its owner had involved me in. Would the prince be so disposed to welcome me, I wondered, if he knew that my first acts in entering his camp had been to insult one of his chieftains and arrange a duel with one of his officers?

Then I must have dozed off for a few minutes. At any rate, I was awakened suddenly by a movement outside, loud voices and the clash of arms.

"The Prince must be aroused," announced some one.

"Who took the prisoner?" was a question several times repeated.

"His Royal Highness, where is his Royal Highness?" bellowed a person who had no regard for those desiring to slumber.

"Very good, sir, I have sent to Sir Thomas Sheridan, requesting him to awaken his Royal Highness," answered the voice of the young subaltern of the guard, who had passed me in.

The voices were lowered at this, and then in the hall outside my door, the officer of the guard said:

"We will put him in here, sir. He will be quite safe."

In the same breath my door was opened, and a man was pushed inside. Before I could speak the door was shut again, and I heard a Highlander ground his musket by the threshold.

It was dark in the room and I could not make out the figure of the involuntary intruder. But resolving to take no chances, I cocked a pistol, as I sat up.

"Who are you, sir?" I asked cautiously.

The prisoner started as if I had fired at him.

"Who—who—" he stammered. Then collecting his wits: "Sir, are you a fellow in misfortune?"

"That is a question I could answer more accurately had I knowledge of the situation in which you find yourself," I returned.

He was silent, but I saw he was peering most intently at me.

"Perhaps a light would assist us to settle the question," I continued.

And I struck flint and steel above a tallow-dip upon a stool near where I lay. As the flame flickered upward the stranger leaned forward with a gasp.

"You!" he exclaimed. "I never dreamed our errand was the same!"

It was Sawtelle, my companion of the road, who had parted from me in Derby market-place not six hours before. His erstwhile jaunty demeanor had vanished, however. Mud coated his breeches, where he had been flung down in the street, and blood was streaked across his forehead from a gaping cut.

"I do not think our errands were the same," I told him.

He looked warily at me.

"Are you not a prisoner?"

"Never less," I retorted. "I am an officer of his Royal Highness's staff."

"Of the Young Pretender's?"

"Of his Royal Highness Prince Charles," I said coldly.

I liked not his Whiggish higgling over titles. But his despondency at my answer was so great that I instantly became sorry for him again.

"Certes, Mr. Chisholm," he said soberly, "my plight is a desperate one."

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"Why, how is that?" He hesitated.

"There is no reason for you to tell me, unless you wish to," I said abruptly.

"No, no," he returned. "Do not misunderstand me. I am in such bitter case, Mr. Chisholm, that I know not what to do." He looked about him with a wild glare that moved my heart to pity. "Within the next few minutes I shall probably be called upon to die a shameful death," he added, and his head drooped forward in utter despair.

"What have you done?"

" 'Tis not what I have done, but what I tried to do," he replied. "I am an officer of Ligonier's Horse. I came hither to Derby on a spying expedition for my general. But I had no sooner entered a tavern in the High Street, after seeking unsuccessfully for information from the time I left you, than I encountered a fellow who must have deserted from my regiment. He proclaimed me before the tap-room. I fled to the street and would have led them a merry chase had not a big Highlander happened along and knocked me from my horse just as I gained the saddle."

"But——"

"I am an officer of the king, within your lines, out of uniform," he said shortly. "There is not an army in the world would spare a man caught so red-handed."

"But you have not gained information such as you sought?" I pressed.

"No, but what avail to tell that story to your commander? He would be a child to believe it."

"I believe it," I said.

" 'Tis kind of you, sir, yet it helps me naught."

"It shall help you, though."

I seized my candle and hurried about the room in my stocking-feet. There was the door to the hall in one wall, and a window in another which gave on the street. I lifted the window curtain—and the figure of a sentry stood revealed outside. In the third wall, opposite the door which opened on the hall, was a second door. I tried it, and it yielded to me. Within was only a small closet, but to my joy there was a window some four feet from the floor which opened upon an alley leading back to the stables in the rear.

"Here," I called to Sawtelle.

He came to me curiously.

"There is your chance," I said, pointing to the window. "I can not be party to your escape. I shall close this door and leave you."

But he caught my hand before I could do so.

"Mr. Chisholm, I can not thank you," he said brokenly, "but it may be the chances of war will give me opportunity to repay you some other time. God bless you!"

I heard voices in the hall, and tore my hand away as I shut the closet door. An instant later I was wrapped up in my cloak, snoring heavily like a man whose rest has been undisturbed.

"Is the fellow in here?" asked Sir Thomas Sheridan's voice.

"Aye, he's in here," replied some one I did not know, a man whose words were chilled by a deadly aloofness, a pitiless coldness which made me shiver.

THE door was thrown open and a light blazed upon my eyelids.

"In here, your Royal Highness," said Sheridan.

"Where? Where is he?" asked the prince. It was plain he was none too pleased at having been aroused at such an hour.

"Why, right there," returned the strange voice.

Footsteps crossed to my side, and the light glared upon my face until the eye-muscles twitched.

" 'Tis Mr. Chisholm!" exclaimed the Prince. "Zounds, Mr. MacRoss, you have laid by the heels my own aide-de-camp!"

Now, when the Prince addressed the stranger as "Mr. MacRoss" my eyes popped open, and I blinked upward at the group surrounding me. "Mr. MacRoss" stood within a yard of me, and he was not my friend David of the ready claymore. He was a well-shaped, black-haired man, with a dead-white skin and an air of arrogant high breeding.

But his eyes were what I saw first, for I looked right into them. They had a steady, blind sort of stare that was most disconcerting. They were more like the eyes of a predatory animal than a human being. Although his face showed entire astonishment, his eyes registered no emotion.

"But this is not the man I put in here," he protested. "Call the officer of the guard."

Voices clamored outside and other per-

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sons began to press into the room. Meantime I had jumped to my feet and stood respectfully before the Prince.

"What know you about this, Mr. Chisholm?" asked his Royal Highness.

"Indeed, and I am at a loss to say anything, sir," I answered. "I heard voices, then this light flashed into my eyes—and the next thing I knew you were here."

The officer of the guard was shoved to the front.

"I know nothing about this gentleman's being here," he said. "I passed him in to Sir Thomas Sheridan early in the evening. That is all I know of him."

" 'Tis all right, your Royal Highness," came Mr. Wogan's voice from the hall. "I placed Mr. Chisholm in this room for lack of other quarters."

"Aye," said Prince Charles perplexedly, "there is no doubt about Mr. Chisholm's being here, but where is the prisoner the Master of Gairloch brought in?"

"We placed him here," reiterated the person addressed as MacRoss. "Did we not?" he appealed to the officer of the guard.

"Aye, sir," said that individual, most wofully puzzled. He turned to me. "Heard you nothing a few minutes ago?" he asked.

"I have been asleep," I returned—truthfully enough.

"Did you enter the room?" questioned Prince Charles.

"No, your Royal Highness, we were in haste, and I tarried only to thrust the prisoner inside and station a sentry by the door. The window on the street also was watched."

The Master of Gairloch cast his weirdly expressionless eyes about the room.

"But that other door?" he said. "Where does that lead to?"

The officer of the guard looked uncertain. Before he could reply the Prince had stepped to the door and wrenched it open.

" 'Swoons, Gairloch, that way flew your prisoner!" he cried amusedly, and pointed to the open window.

"I—I—never——" stammered the miserable subaltern.

" 'Tis no matter, sir," said the Prince not unkindly. "I am not sorry to be able to avoid sentencing one of mine own countrymen and subjects to death. But you must be more careful after this."

The Master of Gairloch, I noticed, gave the poor young officer a baleful glance as he retreated. Had he been allowed his way, I was sure, there would have been a substitute execution.

"But the rascal may not yet have escaped," he exclaimed to the Prince. " 'Tis most necessary to guard against news of our movements reaching the enemy. Shall I raise the hue-and-cry?"

"Certainly, if you wish," agreed Prince Charles coldly. "Although I doubt both the fellow's ability to gain information and your skill to catch him."

"At least, I shall do my best in your service," returned the Master impassively, and he retired with an obeisance to the Prince and a reflective glance at me that I will own made me uncomfortable. There was a concentration of purpose about him that I felt must make him an ugly opponent. And if ever a man hungered for blood, it was he. He had the baffled fury of the tiger balked of his prey.

The Prince was of the same mind with me.

"There's a man I can not fathom," he said with a slight shudder. "If he tastes blood he will not be satisfied. D'you remember him at Gladsmuir, Sheridan?"

Sir Thomas nodded.

" 'Twas he slew the poor fellows when they had thrown down their arms," he answered. "Gad, we had all but to wrest his claymore from him. He's a fiend. But for his rank——"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Aye," said the Prince, "you are right, Sheridan. But I can not discipline the chiefs of clans as I would ordinary men. He is worth three hundred claymores to us, and he is not a bad comrade at the cards."

Sheridan muttered something about "—— Highland pride." I could see that he was no ardent sympathizer with the Scotch lords and chieftains. Nay, his opposition to them had been apparent at the council.

"Well," said the Prince jovially, " 'tis lucky for Mr. Chisholm that we were called in. Otherwise, I believe MacRoss would have had him out with a noose round his neck, rather than be disappointed of a victim."

"Is he chief of the MacRosses, sir?" I asked, recalling the proud boast of the young lady I had threatened to whip.

"Ah, there you have raised a delicate point of surpassing interest to all clansmen,"

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remarked the Prince with a merry laugh. " 'Tis a matter, too, that, as my aide-de-camp you must not mistake about. No, Mr. Chisholm, although the Master is a MacRoss and his father, Lord Gairloch, is also a MacRoss, the titular chief of the MacRosses is a slip of a girl who insists upon riding at the head of her wild clansmen—and who is one of the boldest and most untiring campaigners in our army. I know not the whole story.

"Some generations since there was a split in the ranks of the MacRosses. One faction seceded from the rule of the hereditary chieftains, and the chiefs of this faction became Lords of Gairloch. But the real head of the MacRosses is the lassie I have spoken of—except to Lord Gairloch and his followers and a few others of their way of thinking. 'Tis a point as mooted in the Highlands as that one we Stuarts are now debating with the Hanoverians."

Sheridan had stood impatiently during this conversation.

"The hour grows late——" he urged.

"Nay, early," objected Prince Charles.

"Have it your own way, sir," growled Sir Thomas. "But you had best get a sleep before the tucket sounds."

"Words of wisdom," agreed the Prince. He stifled a yawn. " 'Sblood, Mr. Chisholm, you are in debt to me at last. I verily believe I have saved you an execution. Repay me by bidding that addled young officer of the guard not to arouse me even though Gairloch brings in a score of prisoners—or Cumberland, himself."

I conveyed this order to the somewhat mournful youth who was warming his hands at a fire by the door, and then returned to my own slumbers. I had a feeling that Sawtelle was safe. I had also a feeling, or rather an instinct, that my way would cross that of the Master of Gairloch again. But I slept dreamlessly until aroused by the thudding of drums and the screaming of the bagpipes in the grayness that comes before dawn.

CHAPTER VI

MINE ENEMIES BECOME MY FRIENDS

A HUNDRED bagpipes skirled "The Cock o' the North" as thousands of brawney Highlanders swarmed into Derby market-place. Muskets were tossed on high. Two lithe fellows were doing a sword dance in the midst of a group of admiring clansmen. One vast roar of exultation and clamor for battle greeted us as we of the staff rode behind Prince Charles from the High Street.

" "Claymore! Claymore!"

The Highlanders raised their immemorial battle-cry in greeting to the Prince. His eye kindled in quick response.

"What magnificent spirit!" he called to Lord George Murray. "Gad, sir, they are in the mood to whip Cumberland today! Surely, my lord, you will change your mind before it is too late?"

With a look of displeasure, Lord George shook his head.

"Your Royal Highness must realize the danger of changing well-laid plans at the last minute," he said. "None is more confident than I that these noble fellows could master Cumberland. But after Cumberland——"

"Aye, you have ever an argument to your tongue," rejoined the Prince, and 'twas plain to see that relations between these two, never cordial, were rapidly drawing to a crisis.

Why? God knows. Lord George was old enough to be the Prince's father, skilled in war and politics, and with much at stake, inasmuch as he had been out in the Fifteen, for which he had won pardon, and now could expect no mercy if caught by the Government. Moreover he resented the influence upon the Prince of the handful of Irish officers who surrounded our leader—a feeling which I soon came to share, myself. Landless, reckless, heedless adventurers, these men, for all their personal loyalty to Prince Charles, had no appreciation whatsoever of the risks incurred by the great Scots chieftains, who had flung their all into the cause—and not only their all, but the lives and fortunes of their vassals and dependents.

Their counsel was always opposed to that of the Scots, who furnished the bone and sinew of the army. They were quick to sneer at others who counseled caution, yet several of them were by no means conspicuous in the forefront of battle.

For the Prince—read me his character and I will tell you why he elected to break the delicate bonds of friendship and goodwill which should have knotted him to his lieutenant-general. Prince Charles credited

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the man who last had his ear, and generally that man was an enemy of Lord George, who disdained to stoop to such petty tricks of cabals. Perhaps as much as anything, he resented Lord George's superior judgment and fund of experience—a resentment which Lord George might have smoothed away by tact.

We rode to the head of the column that was forming in the scant dawnlight, fearful townspeople gaping at the spectacle from their windows. After a brief conversation on horseback with Lord George, the Prince beckoned to me.

"You are now Captain Chisholm," he said. "As soon as may be I will proclaim your rank to the army and when we reach Scotland you shall have a commission in regular order. I am lending you to Lord George for the nonce. He requires extra staff officers to arrange his detail of march."

To tell the truth, I was somewhat nervous at this announcement, for Lord George's curtness with the Prince seemed to forecast a disposition difficult to get along with. But he saluted me with a pleasant smile.

"I have much work for you to do, Captain Chisholm," he said. "I shall be in command of the rear column. Please ride at once and find the clan Ross—either Miss MacRoss, the chief, or Ian Dhu MacRoss, captain of the clan, will do. They are to have the post of guarding the rear. 'Tis an hereditary right they claim by virtue of some exploit centuries gone, forgotten by all save themselves and therefore indisputable.

"Tell them his Royal Highness has been pleased to grant their plea in this respect. They will fall in behind the artillery train and are to send patrols through the town lest stragglers be cut off from the column. Report to me as soon as their arrangements are completed."

I found the MacRosses by the simple expedient of keeping an eye out for my gigantic friend David. They were drawn up in a solid mass at the entrance to the street in which I had encountered Miss MacRoss, and at their head stood her protector, looking even bigger than he had in the darkness.

"My business is official, Mr. MacRoss," I said as I rode up to him, "but before we go to it I will just tell you that 'tis not my fault we will have to postpone crossing swords a while."

"Aye," he returned shortly. "Ye wull be in the richt there. 'Twill bide."

As he seemed no more cordial than the night before, I turned to my message.

"I have orders for Miss MacRoss from Lord George Murray," I said.

"Ye can't see her."

"Very well, then, is the captain of the clan about?"

"Aye."

He called something in Gaelic, which was repeated down the ranks, and presently there appeared a man who looked to be an older edition of David, himself. This man was gray-haired, but he did not stoop and he carried his claymore and target with the manner of a warrior.

"My father," said David. "He wull be the captain."

The old man's keen eyes bored through me, and he stood with great dignity, his hands clasped on his claymore hilt, until I had delivered my message.

"I must remain and report the completion of your arrangements," I added.

"Aye," was his sole acknowledgment.

He had as few words as his son. Several guttural orders in Gaelic, which sent gillies scurrying right and left, and he was ready to fall in, he said.

I WAS sitting my horse some distance away during this interval, when the shrilling of strange bagpipes sounded in a parallel street and a second regiment of Highlanders appeared, led by the Master of Gairloch. They passed quite close, exchanging glares with the MacRosses, and at sight of me the Master left the line, crossing the square to my side with quick, short steps.

"You are the aide arranging the details of the rear-guard?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Your orders were to place the clan Ross in that post?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you not come to me?" he demanded arrogantly.

"Because yours is not the clan Ross," I said coolly.

"Sir!" His claymore was half out of the sheath, but in a second he thrust it back.

"You are an Englishman," he went on contemptuously. "I can see that. Naturally, you have no idea of the standing of Highland families. Know, sir, that when

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you are instructed to carry orders to the clan Ross you are to come to me, the heir of the chief of clan Ross and in command of my father's retainers in the field."

I permitted myself a smile of amusement.

"I am grateful for your instruction in Highland lore," I said, "but unfortunately, sir, my general instructed me to carry my orders to Miss MacRoss, the chief of clan Ross. There has been no mistake."

His face twitched with passion, but his eyes gave me the blank inscrutable stare which was his principal characteristic.

"I think," said he softly, "you have crossed my path before."

" 'Tis an honor the extent of which I am fully aware, sir," I replied with a mock bow.

The corners of his lips drew up in ugly fashion, and a slight film clouded his eyes, as if he were striving to conceal some storm that ravaged his inner self.

"Yes," he pursued in even tones, "you were the man who permitted the English spy to escape last night. And you, too, are an Englishman—and joined us only last night?"

The last statement, emphasized as a question, was shot out with a suddenness meant to make it disconcerting. But this man had stirred all my ire, and my one desire was to thwart and humiliate him.

"Quite right, I joined last night," I acknowledged.

"I am aware of your conduct," he declared with a slight quiver of leashed rage in his voice. "I shall take pains to see that his Royal Highness——"

It seemed to me that the time had come to humble him as he deserved.

"Sir," I said cuttingly and raising my voice so that it would carry to the ranks of the MacRosses—every man an interested observer of our conversation, "your threats are as dastardly as they are empty. You speak from baffled blood-thirstiness. 'Sdeath, sir, are you a hangman that you would pursue a prisoner so ravenously? 'Tis no occupation for a gentleman."

His face flushed purple. The pupils of his eyes dwindled to pin-points of yellow light.

"You shall answer for those remarks," he exclaimed. "Come, sir——"

"I am not altogether of a mind to fight you," I returned coldly. " 'Tis a matter I must first seek the advice of gentlemen concerning. Your reputation is not of the best, and I am not sure 'tis necessary to accept your challenge." He took a step nearer.

"Perhaps a whipping will move you, Englishman."

I pointed in the direction taken by his clan.

"Sir, there lies your path," I said sharply. "This is no time for duelling. I will consider this matter another time. And I would have you know—" I was careful to raise my voice again—"that the clan Ross will exert its hereditary right to guard the army's rear. No outlaw sept receives that honor."

He hesitated. There was a restless clashing of arms in the ranks of the MacRosses, and as I had expected, he dared not risk possible humiliation in the face of this enemy clan.

His pupils gradually expanded—a most uncanny trick—as he got his rage under control, but the balefulness of his stare increased.

"I shall not forget you, Englishman," he said, again emotionless. "You shall feel my sword."

I watched him out of sight, reflecting, now it was too late, that here I had been less than twenty-four hours in Prince Charles's army and already had made bitter enemies in two clans. 'Twas fast progress, I admitted, but not calculated to prolong life or promote a successful career. And I turned from contemplation of my latest enemy to find David standing by me.

"She wull see ye," he said.

"Who?" I asked.

"Miss MacRoss."

She was standing with old Ian Dhu MacRoss and several other Highland officers in front of her clan, and all of them were eying me with disconcerting intentness. The clansmen in the front ranks went farther. They whispered and exchanged great silly laughs.

AS I swung down from my saddle Miss MacRoss took a quick step forward. She was dressed as she had been the night before, a little claymore hanging from her belt and a miniature target slung over her back. In one of the stockings of heavy wool that came to just below her knees was stuck a skein dhu such as all her clansmen carried.

"You will be for fighting a duel, I hear, with David MacRoss," she said severely.

I felt as uncomfortable as I had after threatening to beat her.

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"Why, I fear there is nothing else for it," I made shift to answer. "'Tis a pother of my own making, as you know."

"But 'tis not Christian at all in times like these, and we with all the English to fight. Why, even we MacRosses have made a truce with the Laird of Gairloch."

"But 'tis not for me to say," I protested. "Mr. MacRoss—or yourself—is the injured party."

"And what shall we say to that, David?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders and looked as uncomfortable as I did.

"Then 'tis for me to decide, I see," she remarked.

And now for the first time I perceived a twinkle in her eye that acquainted me she was up to some mischief of her own.

"In truth, ma'am," I said, "none other than yourself should have the decision."

She pulled a long face.

"That is so like a man, to be trying to put the responsibility on a woman."

Ian Dhu emitted a growl, which consideration of his face persuaded me was intended for a laugh.

"What is your wisdom in this?" she asked him.

"I wad be o' the same thocht as yoursel," he returned in broad Scots. "The English gentleman offendit wi'oot intention. Syne he wull hae befriendit the clan. We wull be in his debt."

To my great surprise this sentiment was approved by the other Highland officers and by David, himself.

"You see how it is," said Miss MacRoss, "I will not be able to get a man of my clan to fight for me. We must call quits, Mr. Chisholm."

"Nothing will please me better," I responded. "But why should you? I have apologized for what I said to you, and I will apologize again; but I am free to say I would not consider that sufficient recompense, myself, in a like case."

"Ah, but you English have such queer ways of looking at things," she declared quaintly. "Now, with us in the Highlands the first law is 'do unto others as they do unto you.' If a man befriends you, befriend him. If he robs you or hurts you, take vengeance upon him. You have befriended us, now you are our friend."

"But how have I befriended you?"

"When you humbled the Master of Gairloch and risked his enmity to uphold the right of clan Ross." Her voice rang with enthusiasm. "There is not a MacRoss of my clan, Mr. Chisholm, but will hold you brother for your act. You will be English maybe, but I think some good fairy must have planted a sprig of heather in your heart. Forgive me for my wee joke. It will be all the vengeance I ask for the beating you did not give me."

"'Tis little enough reparation," I cried. "And indeed, Miss MacRoss, I am glad to escape at least one duel and the hatred of one clan."

"Why?" said she quickly.

"Well, I mind it not now, but when I still expected your people's dislike I was not very happy to think of having also in prospect a duel with Gairloch."

"With Gairloch?" she cried. "But you must not fight him."

"How can I help it?"

She called her gentlemen about her, and they exchanged rapid volleys of Gaelic.

"Aye, they all say the same, she reported triumphantly. "He is not a clean fighter. He was banished to the Low Countries for dirking a man in his back. You shall not fight him."

"That is to be seen," I returned.

"You shall not fight him, Mr. Chisholm," she reiterated.

"Well," said I, "certes, I have no intention of interrupting the march to fight a duel with one of our own army. 'Tis a matter can wait a better day."

"Ye wull fecht the Maister some day, but not soon," said Ian Dhu MacRoss abruptly.

I turned toward him in some surprise, but the look on Miss MacRoss's face arrested me.

"Oh, foster-father!" she gasped. "Have you seen?"

"I hae seen," he replied solemnly. "'Twas nae verra clear, but all in a wabbly mist like when a weird is a lang way frae being dreed."

She grasped him by the arm.

"But how—did you not see——"

He looked down at her sadly.

"The sicht wull hae gaed awa' frae me, Sheila," he said. "Ye'll ken well 'tis oot o' ma power to gie ye more."

Miss MacRoss wrung her hands.

"Oh, Mr. Chisholm, you must be very careful," she exclaimed. "With an enemy

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like the Master you may expect anything. Have you a servant?"

"No."

"You shall have one of my own gillies, a boy with courage, who can at least protect your back at night."

"But why this fear?" I expostulated. "What earthly reason——"

"I'm thinking it may very well not be earthly," she returned darkly. "But earthly or no, there is no doubt Ian Dhu has the sight!"

"Into the future? You believe that?"

"Believe it? I have had too many demonstrations of it. Did he not see my own father dead and how we should find his body on the Braes of Slioch? If Ian sees a thing 'twill come to pass."

I looked incredulously at the possessor of this magic power. But he was the most unconcerned of us all, and was already busy detailing detachments to search for stragglers. Presently, the pipers of the MacRosses struck up a clan chant, "Wull Ye Still Gang Awa', Gairloch?" and the regiment tramped to the market-place and fell in as escort to the artillery train.

The sun was peeping over the house-tops, and the great retreat was about to begin. As I galloped off to render my report to Lord George, Sheila MacRoss waved to me, and I waved back to her. How unexpected the shifts of this new life of mine!

CHAPTER VII

ROUTE-MARCHING AND GRAY EYES

BEFORE they had marched a mile out of Derby the Highlanders discovered by the marks at the wayside that they were in retreat, and the martial ardor which had animated them was replaced by sorrow and depression. For whatever was the opinion of the leaders of the army, I soon learned that the men in its ranks were confident of their ability to outfight any force that opposed them. They could conceive of no reason for retiring. The chill, damp weather, the muddy roads, and this unexplained termination of their victorious invasion, all served to cast an atmosphere of gloom over the day's progress. The army entered Ashborn at night dispirited and melancholy.

But by the morning the shadow was swept away. Prince Charles, I heard, was the one exception. He rode at the head of the column, morose, downcast and aloof, in striking contrast to the example of cheerfulness he had set during the advance, when he insisted upon marching on foot and animated all by his example. As for the clansmen, rumors of fighting ahead served to cure their mental ills. With three armies disposed around them, they argued that at least one battle must fall to their lot; and with the prospect of a battle the Highlanders were satisfied.

'Twas a dreary experience at best, however. We of the staff knew that the sole chance of escaping to Scotland rested upon our dodging through the barriers which were being set up round about us. The populace, never cordial before, were now openly hostile. Lord George must exert every care to see to it that no stragglers were left anywhere, for the life of a man who wandered out of sight of the column was not worth a minute's purchase. The feeling against the Highlanders was almost unbelievable.

At Leek, where we stopped the second night, I was assigned quarters in a decent house close by the Stag Inn. A fair, buxom woman met me at the door, twisting her hands in her apron, the marks of recent tears upon her cheeks.

"Everything is yours, sir," she protested nervously. "You shall have excellent treatment. Please, sir——"

"I shall ask for very little," I interrupted, "and whatever I take I shall pay for. That is our order, ma'am."

Her disbelief showed in her face.

"Here," I said, taking out a handful of shillings, "how much shall I put you out for a night's lodging and two meals?"

She stammered something.

"Shall we say half a crown?"

"Oh, sir——"

I tossed the coin down on the table. She was not dilatory in seizing upon it, I noted.

"And now," I continued, "I should appreciate food, good dame."

Black Betty I had seen to already. She was well stabled in the rear of the inn. So I threw myself down in a chair by the hearth and basked in the light of the comfortable fire.

My hostess moved about from the settle to the fireside and back again, always with a restless eye upon me.

"You seem perturbed?" I said finally.

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"I? Oh, no, sir."

"Where is your husband?"

"He's away, sir."

"Afraid we might press him, eh?"

She looked uncertain.

"Sure, and you must know by now we take no men unwillingly," I said.

"He did not know," she mumbled.

The end of a cradle projected from a curtain which was hung across a recess in the wall.

"Ah," said I lazily, and without thought, "you have children?" She turned quickly.

"Oh, no, sir," she denied passionately, "I have no children." I pointed to the cradle.

"It—it died," she said slowly.

My conscience smote me.

"Indeed, ma'am, and 'twas most unthoughtful of me to remind you of your grief. I ask your pardon. 'Tis not my desire to hurt or trouble you in aught, and I am more than sorry that I must trespass at all."

She gave me a strange look at this, and went on with her preparation of my dinner. Suddenly, as she was setting the table for me, she said:

"They do say, sir, the Highlanders eat babes of tender age."

I stared at her with mouth agape.

"They? Who?" I asked in astonishment.

"Well, folks says it, sir," was her answer.

I roared with laughter.

"Ma'am," said I, "there is not a man in our army would touch the tenderest babe—save, mayhap, to buss it for memory of a child he knows."

She came and stood in front of me.

"Is that really true?" she demanded earnestly.

"Absolutely," I told her, "and into the bargain, as you must have judged by this time, I am not even a Scotsman, but as good an Englishman as your own man."

She drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thank God!" said she.

And with that she flew to a door across the room.

"Come out, children," she said. The gentleman won't eat you, after all!"

There tumbled out two flaxen-haired babes, round-eyed and docile as kittens, each with a finger in its smudgy mouth and apparently not the slightest realization of the horror lying behind the inference in their mother's speech. Ere my dinner was ready I had one on each knee, and was beginning to understand their odd, North-country patois, which they had from their father, the mother said, she being a Derbyshire woman.

The ninth of December we entered Manchester. This town, which had given the Prince the liveliest welcome of any place in the Southern kingdom, rose against us in arms, and we lost several men in interchanges of shot with the mob. Two days later we reached Preston, where we stayed a day to rest our weary feet, who were doing such marching as the officers of the French king's service said had never been equaled in the most famous campaigns of history.

Here Mr. Wogan pointed out to me the scenes of the lively battle which had been fought in Preston streets in the Fifteen and in which he had been taken prisoner.

"'Tis a place of ill-omen for the Jacobite cause," he said, "and we can not be too soon out of it to suit me."

On the thirteenth of December we entered Lancaster, and stayed a day to permit the artillery train to catch up. We should have been able to march even faster than we did had it not been for this incumbrance. Useless as it was, we could not abandon it for honor as well as because the clansmen derived a certain assurance from the knowledge that if it came to fighting they would be backed by artillery.

The MacRosses were Lord George's main reliance. They were proud of their record of not having lost a man by straggling, and they indignantly repelled a suggestion that they be relieved of their arduous rear-guard duty. Whenever the wagons were mired, Sheila MacRoss would slip off the rough Highland pony she rode, and under her personal direction a half-score broad-backed clansmen would lift the wheels out of the ruts and make progress possible.

THE servant she had promised to send me turned up at Leek, a shock-headed gillie with maybe six words of English, and I promptly sent him back to her—a good thing, for I fear if I had sought to introduce him to mine hostess there, she would never have believed that the Highlanders were not baby-eaters. Evan MacRoss had all the outward seeming of an ogre. Next morning, who should accost me as I marshaled the rear-guard out of the village, but Miss MacRoss, vastly indignant.

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"How is this, Mr. Chisholm?" says she. "Evan came back to me last night and said you would have none of him."

" 'Twas no discourtesy intended," I said with some embarrassment, "but I begin to think, Miss MacRoss, you overestimate any danger I may run from Gairloch, and——"

"You do not know of what you will be speaking," she returned curtly.

Then seeing my color rise at this, she went on swiftly:

"I would not be meaning to hurt your feelings, but you do not know the Highlands. A man like the Master has no restraints upon him. In the Highlands we chiefs have absolute power. What we want, we take, if we choose. Why, the Master's father got his title by forcing marriage upon an unfortunate woman who was his rival for the succession. He carried off her and the priest, and his pipers played to drown her screams. The Master would think nothing of having you dirked some night. He has done as much in the past."

I was silent.

"Now, will you take Evan?" she pressed. "He is not good to look at," she went on with sweet persuasiveness, "but if I had a better servant you should have him."

I was touched at this.

"Indeed, and I would not slight your kindness," I replied. "I will take him gladly, but if we have difficulties in the matter of language, you must be content to help me."

"That I will gladly," she declared.

We were riding at the side of the rear company, Lord George being some distance ahead with Ian Dhu and David, consulting about the day's march. 'Twas the first time we had met alone since leaving Derby market-place, and I was blithe to seize the chance for closer friendship.

"You spoke of the Master's father," said I. "Where is he?"

She smiled a trifle grimly.

"Aye, where?" she repeated. "They are canny men, the Gairlochs. They are playing this minute an old Scots game, Captain Chisholm; one many other families are playing in this trouble and have played often in the past. The Master is out with the Prince, taking the clan—or a good part of it—with him. Laird Gairloch sits home at Stroan Castle, writing letters to the Lord President Forbes and Argyle, telling them how loyal he is to King George and how broken-hearted he will be that his reckless son has been carried away by this Stuart madness."

I was puzzled, and I suppose, looked it.

"What? You will not see it?" she exclaimed in amusement. "Well, 'tis a Scots play, sure enough, and 'tis not surprising an Englishman would miss it. 'Tis just this, Mr. Chisholm—if Prince Charles wins, then the Master will take care of his father's interest. And if the Elector wins, why, then the Gairloch estates will still remain in the family, and in time Laird Gairloch, on the plea of his loyalty, will be able to gain a pardon for the Master. Either way, the family is safe."

"And is the old Lord like the son?"

"Like?" she cried. "Aye, they are as like in evil as two scones of the same baking. But to be fair, you would say the old one is a trifle more skilled by reason of his greater experience—not but that the Master will improve in time."

"You concede him that much?" said I with a smile.

"I will believe any evil of them," she returned icily. "They killed my father, although there will be no proof to hang them."

"Why, do you mean to say that a man of family could be——"

"You are English, Captain Chisholm," she answered steadily. "You do not understand that in the Highlands many things happen which would be impossible below the Forth. As you will know, there has been rivalry for generations between my family and the Gairlochs. They hate us because we retain the clan chieftainship."

"One night my father set out to come home from a friend's house across the braes of Slioch and he was not seen again in life. We found him murdered, the dirk in his back. He had no enemies, save the Gairlochs, but there was no proof, so the lawmen in Edinburgh said. Ian Dhu mustered the clan and would have marched to take vengeance, but Gairloch was ready and Lochiel and Clanranald both advised him to wait, for the English and the Low-country lords would have borne hard on a clan that raised a mischief just then. We have waited ever since, but our time will come."

"God knows that is enough to have against a man," said I, deeply moved.

"Oh, that is not all," she replied.

"No? What else?"

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She eyed me half-askance.

"Well," said she, very low, "this Summer they were for arranging that I should wed with the Master."

The hot anger welled up in me so fierce that I did not know myself. My hand flew to my sword-hilt.

"'Sblood, was there none to resent the insult?" I demanded harshly.

She gave me a shy look of thanks that made my anger fade away.

"All of my clan," she answered simply, "but short on the heels of the offer came the Prince's landing, and his first request was that we should make a truce with Gairloch. I was hopeful we would not have to, when Laird Gairloch refused to come out. Bnt there was nothing for it, after the Master joined. We handfasted before the Prince and the other chiefs at Blair Athole."

Now, when she spoke of handfasting with that thorough young scoundrel, the Master, my blood commenced to boil again.

"It seems to me that was unnecessary to the formalities," I objected hotly. "'Tis contamination for you to so much as touch a person of Gairlôch's depravity. Surely."

"Nay," she interrupted, smiling merrily, "'twas long weeks syne, and the Master knew well that it meant nothing. However, if you fear a pox on my hand, I will endeavor to be remembering it."

"'Tis not that at all," I rejoined with temper. "And if you think to mock me I do not take it kindly."

I gathered up my bridle and we rode along in silence for as much as five minutes.

"Sure," said she at last in coaxing tones, "if you think 'tis so serious, Captain Chisholm——"

A pause.

"And if I do?" I asserted, still with a warmth under my collar.

"Why, maybe you would be for taking off the harm by an honest man's hand," she remarked innocently.

I looked at her. Did I say she had wonderful eyes? Gray they were in most lights, but they turned dark in certain moods, and the lashes were long and black.

"The general will be calling for you," she said after a while.

"Oh," said I.

"Well?" she asked.

Slowly, very slowly, she reached out her hand.

"You will be slow-witted, even for an Englishman," she observed pertly.

"I may be slow-witted," I plucked up courage to say—and my voice did not sound quite right, I am free to admit, as I gripped her limber fingers, "but you will find me a true friend to those that want me."

"Yes, you would be," she agreed with that touch of adorable seriousness that punctuated the lightness of her manner.

Then after an interval, she suggested:

"And Lord George?"

It was as if I had been shot. I clapped spurs into Black Betty's sides and drove up the road like an arrow from a bow. I did not think even to bid her good-by. A fine soldier, I reflected in panic, to be dilly-dallying when his general was calling him. I drew rein at Lord George's elbow, expecting to be put under arrest. But he only smiled upon me.

The deep lines of fatigue and anxiety were riven in his face, for he worked whilst the rest of us slept, and night was the same as day to him. And his smile, I think, was all the more beautiful for this and because of the natural ferocity of his countenance.

"'Tis a pleasant lass and a brave one, Captain Chisholm," said he. "A leaguer is all the better and brighter for such as she. Is the rear company keeping up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ride forward and discover me the distance we have fallen behind the main column."

Yet there were some, mark you, that held this man a fiend, without kindliness, mercy or human feeling! To me he was all that a father might have been, and in those few days of our hard retreat he taught me the groundwork of the great art of war.

"The essence of success in battle," he used always to tell me, "is to shake the confidence of your opponent. This is best done by attacking him. Especially is this true, in the case of such troops as we now have with us. They are at their best in attack. Therefore, Captain Chisholm, always attack, even if the odds be against you."

I was to have a chance to put his instructions to the test sooner than either he or I expected.

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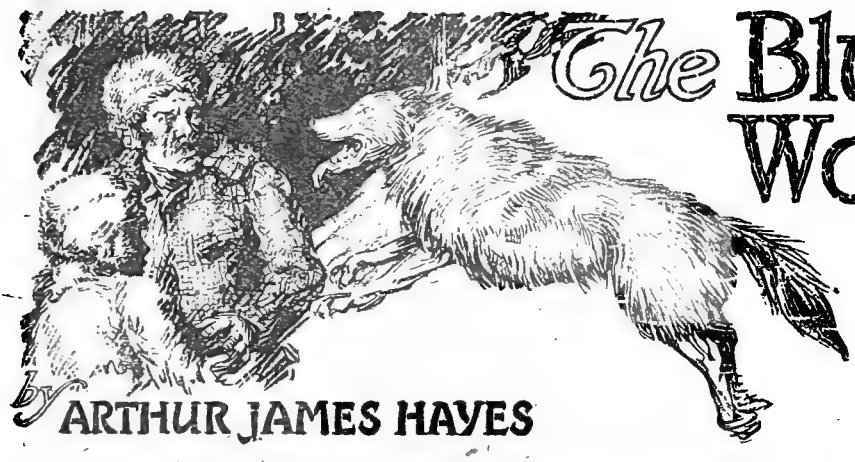

The Blue Wolf

by ARTHUR JAMES HAYES

Author of "The Epic of Silver King," "Loot of the 'Aztec Chief,'" etc.

"KENANA BOB" KETTERSON propped himself up in his bunk and spoke with difficulty.

"He goes to you, Stan," he said. His wide overbright eyes shifted from the young prospector to the great overgrown pup on the floor. In their glance was the regret of a man who sees the end of the trail, and the pride of one who bestows his treasures on a trusted friend.

"There ain't nothin' like him ever breathed, Stan. Where he came from I don't know, but what he *is*, I'll back him for to the last moccasin bead. He scratched at my door here, last Winter, on one of those cold blizzardy nights that make you glad you're on the lee side of a spruce fire. He was just a tiny ball of frost-coated slate-gray fur, whimpering an' sick with the cold. I fetched him an' stuck him by the fire to thaw out.

"He was so durn weak I figured he mightn't never come around, so I slung him down 'longside of the blaze, like a wet rag. 'Long about half an hour later, when I got my head in a year-old magazine I borrowed at the Fort, I hear one h—— of a ruction.

"Seems like old 'Skeeno Joe' what has house privileges along of bein' a veteran lead, got cur'ous enough to go over an' sniff the little bundle. It was a durn expensive sniff. That little slate-colored devil just nat'rally came around between two seconds, an' like to have chewed the end o' old Joe's nose off.

"The old malemiut was mad clean through and edged fer a killin' but I pried him off, and took a good long look at the newcomer. He had the smallest most pointed ears I ever see, and the softest fur I ever touched. Not quite so blue as you see it now, but deep enough to make the ordinary gray dog look pale by comparison. He didn't offer any fight, but kinda crouched down after the way of a pup that's been kicked around good an' plenty.

"Examinin' the little pointed ears I ain't long in seein' that they've been clipped. Cuttin' the ears o' helpless pups is a white man's practise, what the heathin' Yaheets ain't hep to. It makes me cur'ous about his breed an' where he comes from.

"That last I ain't never learned. He might have fallen off a sleigh bound in toward the Ramparts, or he might have hiked in forty or fifty miles from the Laughin' Lake country. But I ain't long in sizin' him up for an odd one.

"You'll notice he has the diamond-shaped pupils o' the true timber wolf, an' squarer shoulders an' longer legs than any husky I ever lamped. I've wondered a heap. Steve Haddon used to talk about that brindled Great Dane he lost up around Porcupine. Said she was the biggest brute he ever laid eyes on. There used to be a famous outlaw black wolf up in those parts too, that I've heard Hudson Bay and Independent fur-trappers speakin' of.

"Whether he's any relation to either of 'em I can't say, o' course, but a brindle-black cross sometimes shows blue they tell me. Wherever he came from, I'll say fer 'im that he's the fightin'est devil that breathes.

"Aleek tackled him down at Valdez, last

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May, an' he was holdin' the old killer to a draw when I butted in. Aleek's chewed up many a good scrapper in less time. All the dogs in camp steer clear o' him, which is some consid'able compliment for a fifteen-month-old pup. But he's yours now. He ought to make the greatest leader that ever tightened a trace."

Talking was harder for the old sourdough. Stanley Truax stepped over and gently pressed him back upon the blankets.

"Easy old-timer," he urged. "Your say-so for the pup's good enough for me. If he's got it in him, and you ought to know, we'll make him the greatest lead dog that ever stretched moosehide!"

The veteran prospector smiled weakly, and stretched out his arm.

"Luck to you, old pard," he said. "The best man and the best dog, that's——"

But a paroxysm of coughing wrenched his wasted frame and brought bloody froth to his pallid lips. Truax squeezed the bony hand, choked himself, and promised to be up early in the morning.

THE cabin was strangely quiet the next morning. Prone beside the bunk the great blue dog drowsed, and in it, "Kenana Bob" Ketterson stared with wide, unseeing eyes at the frost-rimed ceiling. With the first gray light of the reluctant dawn he had faced the Long Trail alone.

The slate-blue dog never questioned the new voice of authority. He installed himself in Truax's cabin with quiet assurance, and stared at his new master with inscrutable orange-green eyes, that had the oblique cast of the timber wolf, and the more benign intelligence of the dog. Occasionally he would follow Truax about the camp, but that timid manifestation of affection was the only one the great dog vouchsafed.

He was not hard to break.

"Skajax will whip him into shape," said Truax. "He's been breaking in dogs for the last six years. About two days on the trail will do."

The Blue Wolf was as big as the largest husky when Truax first slipped the moosehide collar over his pointed ears. Save for a menacing growl and a stirring of the coarse blue hair on his neck, the big dog made no protest. He refused to rise at the command, though, and endured the sting of the rawhide stoically.

When the command to "mush" was shouted, he permitted himself to be dragged until the choking collar cut off the air from his straining lungs. The blue sky overhead was growing black before his blood-filled eyes, when by some miraculous chance he gained his feet.

The torturing grip at his throat eased off. The crisp frosty air stung again in his lungs. The breadth between the strange slant eyes augured a good canine intelligence. The practical value of compliance had been demonstrated. It was his one and only protest.

Thereafter, he trotted along, obediently. Nor was he long in learning that it was better to throw the weight of his long body into the creaking collar, than to endure the agony of the hissing, crackling whiplash. In a month he could outpull any husky in camp. In two months he had fought his way to the leadership.

His had been an unusual rapidity of promotion. But from the first, truculent old Skajax, whose custom it had been to thoroughly trounce newcomers into respect for authority, refused to touch him. Skeenah the courageous and Wishiwhit the sullen, both accepted the gage of battle.

Wishiwhit's broken leg never healed properly, and Truax had to shoot him. Skeenah went down gamely, crushed beneath the Blue Wolf's hundred and thirty pounds, and slashed to ribbons by the lightning play of the great white tusks.

Porcupine, a waddling old mongrel purchased in Yellow Bear, and Ahluht, a Siberian trailer, gave no offense and were never molested. When the big blue husky trotted up to Skajax's place in the lead, the grizzled old Klondike veteran took no umbrage. Instead he fought Skeenah for second place, and forced the one-eyed battler to accept the old position of the Blue Wolf.

The new leader justified Ketterson's dying prediction. Truax raced for the Government mail contract, and the great slate-blue mystery dog proved himself able to lope when the others were walking, and to walk when the rest lay down in the traces, and pleaded mutely, with weary eyes, to be allowed to remain there. His great feet sought every crack and crevice in the rough ice of the Porcupine River. He pulled with the crouching concave back and sprawled gripping toes, that augurs the trace dog to the manner born.

Truax lost, but the Blue Wolf hauled the

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sleigh alone for the last twenty-six miles, while his exhausted comrades tottered along behind. The footsore and beaten little cavalcade received a finer ovation at the tape, than the winners, a set of rangy Indian mongrels from the Rabbit Rapids country.

Blue Wolf, as Truax had christened him, throve amazingly under the most adverse conditions. The exercise seemed all that was necessary to harden him and fill out the gaunt frame.

They weighed him on the factor's scales at Temiskan, and the whole store crowded around to be able to say that they had seen the bar balance at one hundred and seventy-three pounds. Trappers and prospectors swore with awed profanity that his like had never been seen in the North.

He stood head and shoulders over the other dogs, a great, glorious slate-blue animal, with oblique orange-flecked eyes, and the longest, smoothest hair of any dog in camp. His forehead had the extreme breadth peculiar to a mastiff or St. Bernard, but his muzzle had the long tapered proportions of the true wolf. His little clipped ears were very pointed and very erect. They were disproportionately small, and the contrast served to accentuate the lion-like majesty of the head.

He never barked. His dog strain was too meager for that. But his very quietness added a menace to his air of truculent dignity. He attached himself to Truax as a self-constituted bodyguard, and assumed the right to sleep beside his bunk. He walked among men as among dogs, with the air of one who courted no favors and accorded none. Toward the last, it was even whispered that he wouldn't yield right of way to an Indian or half-breed!

From the first he manifested an illconcealed hostility for redskins, and for the smaller and more timid Eskimos his contempt was nnbounded. They came occasionally to trade carved walrus tusks for the iron-nails, powder and print calico they esteemed so indespensable to their well-being. They declared Blue Wolf too huge and offcolored to be anything but a frost devil incarnate. He was esteemed bad medicine, and shunned as a plague.

THE camp's chronology reckons from the day succeeding the finish of the race. The team was resting up after the three-hundred-and-sixty-mile grind, and Truax was recuperating from frost bites and incipient snow-blindness, when Porcupine, the peaceful, was minded to take a stroll through the town.

The Indians laughed derisively at the staid old black-and-tan mongrel, with the short legs and heavy body who limped so soberly down the street. The curs sniffed curiously, and followed him in increasing numbers.

Down at the "Golden Ghost," Del Farrington stood in the doorway, and yawned his disdain of the sights in the straggling little camp. Something of bored amusement showed in his black eyes as the preternaturally solemn Porcupine shuffled by. The old trailer had never in his blundering life given offense to man or beast. He was giving none now.

But Farrington craved amusement.

"Watch somethin' funny," he counseled those near him.

Then he turned toward the door of the saloon.

"Here Fitz," he called.

A large black dog bounded out, his hair already bristling in anticipation of battle. It was his sole occupation. Farrington fought him for wages or for fun, as the spirit moved him.

"Get him, Fitz, old boy!" hissed his owner. "Nail him!"

The black batter was on top of the Porcupine before the trail-weary old dog realized what had happened. Fitz seized him by the side of the head and shook him as a wolf would shake a snow-shoe rabbit. In an instant the other camp curs and trail huskies were piled on top of the old dog. Torn in a score of places, old Porcupine yelped his agony.

Down the street sped a huge slate-gray brute, with a roaring resonant snarl that brought every one within a block to the door. Straight as a die for the scene of conflict he ran. Dogs, papooses and at least one full-grown man were bowled over without any decrease in speed. In half a minute he was at the scene of the battle.

He ripped the throat out of a yellow Weshakaik dog who was crunching one of the prostrate Porcupine's legs. Then his long lean muzzle drove in again, and an Ahluht cur yelped in mortal agony with his spine broken, and crept away with hind legs dragging.

Time after time the great head with its tiny pointed ears, was lost in the tangled

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mass. Then by some brute telepathy, the circle widened just as abruptly as it had coalesced about Fitz and the yelping Porcupine.

Over the gory wreck stood the Blue Wolf, his mighty crest erect and quivering, his bleeding tusks bared in the lean wolf grin of hate. From the great throat, in a steady sustained sound, like the roar of distant rapids, rose the resonant echo of his rage. About him, with torn throats and shattered legs, ranged the husky pack. Their lips too, writhed horribly, and the sound of many throats vibrating to fighting snarls, brought a gathering crowd.

Behind the dogs ranged the men, eagerly intent upon the staging of the most magnificent challenge that ever thrilled human pulse. The tar-papered bulk of the "Golden Ghost" afforded Blue Wolf security from a treacherous rear attack. On either flank, and in a great arc, the pack waited. His orange-flecked eyes, narrowed to tiny slits with the ferocity of his roaring fury, ranged warily about the eager semicircle.

Farrington stared in astonished rage at the ignoble termination of his sport. He had heard of the Blue Wolf. But he had never believed the tales of his prowess. Now before him sprawled an epitome of the truth.

Fitz lay very quietly in the snow, almost at Blue Wolf's feet. Blood from his torn jugular pumped in an even scarlet stream over the trampled area. Like the crippled Ahluht cur, he had found his hind legs suddenly and strangely useless. The Porcupine's revenge had not long been delayed.

If there was any affection in the gambler's callous nature, it had inhered in his regard for the black dog. With a curse of profane fury, he made as if to draw his gun.

It will ever remain a mooted question as to who hit him first. From Sitka to the Ramparts, are distributed men who will claim that honor. Suffice it to say that the competition was keen. When he had picked himself up he stared into the narrowed eyes of Stanley Truax himself.

"If you ever make another play for Blue Wolf," he said quietly, "I am going to be at a lot of pains to choke you to death. Shooting's too refined for a skunk of your accomplishments. Garroting or hemp-stretching would be more appropriate. The Blue Wolf will want to use the streets now and then. If you got any more black curs you're keen to sic on dogs with more brains than yourself, go ahead. He'll accommodate 'em. But ease off the hardware!"

He strode away from the battered cardsharp and bent over Porcupine. The old dog licked his hand gratefully, quivered once or twice and then lay still.

The prospector's bronzed face worked, and the vision of the great blue dog was blurring, when a voice sounded very close to his ear:

"I've never seen anything so magnificent in my life," it said.

Admiration and awe thrilled in the musical tones. He glanced up. A dark-eyed girl in white furs was standing beside him. Her hand rested fearlessly on the Blue Wolf's head. The big dog had suddenly ceased to snarl. Impelled by much cuffing and kicking, the husky circle was dissolving. Martial honors remained with the late arrival.

"There never was anything finer," said the girl.

Her cheeks were pink with excitement and her lips slightly parted with wonderment at it all. Truax smiled.

"There never has been anything like it!" he assured her. "We've just witnessed something that will never happen again."

The crowd thronged around them, proffering many hands, shouting congratulations, and jostling each other for a glance at the dog who had broken up a kill, and defied a whole pack! Truax strove to speak again to the girl with the splendid eyes but the shifting throng surged in between them, and she was lost to sight.

He thanked his well-wishers absently, and followed by the Blue Wolf wormed his way out of the concourse. Up at the Blue Moon he encountered Billy Randolph. The old sourdough grinned delightedly and pumped his arm for a full minute.

"Where the —— did you get 'im?" he queried. "That blue devil sure is the battlin' wonder o' the age. Black Fitz chewed up one o' mine last week, an' to see him bit up into three pieces fills me with plumb inhuman delight!"

Truax smiled.

"Haven't seen you since the time you pulled that hooch-crazy Yaheet off my back down Valdez way," he said. "Heard you were married but you're looking too plump, pink and prosperous for that!"

"I am though. Finest little girl in the

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world too. You're gettin' along Stan, old boy. Twenty-seven now, ain't you? Well, it's time you were off the trail an' settled down. Why don't you cop off that pink-cheeked little pippin what made the fuss over Blue Wolf?"

"Who is she, Billy?" Truax strove to make the query properly casual.

The older man signaled the bartender, and then answered with apparent irrelevancy.

"Remember the 'Missing Midas' affair, a few years back?"

"I knew Hartigan slightly. Met him on the first scramble through Chilikat. Quiet fellow. He was the one, wasn't he?"

"He's the one. Well, about four years ago he blew in here with a pokeful of the reddest dust I've ever seen. Boasted in the 'Golden Ghost' that he had half a ton of it cached somewhere back in the hills. Said that a little creek quartered through a ledge of rotten quartz, milled the gold free in the rapids, and dropped the dust in a heap in the first stretch of quiet water.

"His dogs went mad—fox got to 'em I guess—and he hiked in for another team. Some of the boys thought he was merely drunk, and others seemed to think that he'd stumbled across the mysterious 'Missing Midas,' that Boston O'Brien was babbling about, when they found him on the Little Otter, snow-blind and frozen and delirious.

"What the facts were, none of us ever found out. He knocked Buck Logan down for some remark he passed to one o' the dance-hall girls. An hour or so later they found Hartigan dead in the little alley between the 'Golden Ghost' and 'Mother's Place.' He'd been shot in the back. Everybody suspected Logan, o' course, but he framed some sort of alibi and the lynchin' bee was called off.

"There was a general rush for discovery on the Missing Midas creek, but it's still waitin' for the first set o' claim stakes. The country's too big for fine-comb methods, and that's about all that would locate a creek o' that size, in thirty thousand square miles of wild country. Anyhow, the little girl breezes up here, an' says that she's Hartigan's kid sister, and only livin' relative. He'd written her about the natural placer before Logan got in his work.

"Says she's got a chart of some kind, and will go fifty-fifty with whoever will grubstake her an' handle the dogs. I'd take her up myself, only the wife can't see trail-breakin' at this time o' year. Most o' the boys think that Hartigan was locoed when he drew the chart. He was a quiet sort o' fellow, and the lone hand he played made him kinda queer; leastwise, that's the story floatin' around. Everybody's holdin' back on the play, figurin' that some one else kin bite."

"How did the girl get here?"

"Came up with Captain Merrill's wife an' daughter. She's been here about two weeks now. But nobody seems keen to take her up, most of 'em havin' worked the racket once after Hartigan croaked. 'Pears to me that it's a fine chance to make a fortune—or wear out your dogs chasin' a crazy man's pipe dream."

"But he had some gold with him, didn't he?"

"He shore did. Reddest dust I ever lamped. But he didn't even carry a pokeful of it, which is kinda strange, consid'rin' that he claimed to have cached about half a ton o' it. It was red, too. Classiest-lookin' metal I've ever seen!"

"That's good enough for me. Red gold must have come from the upper hills, to have iron in it. The dust panned locally is pretty pale—almost fifteen per cent. silver. This red stuff listens large to me. See you again!"

Randolph stared after the retreating figure. His shrewd eyes swept admiringly over the lean lines and broad shoulders. He raised his glass aloft.

"To the best man, dog an' gal that ever bucked the trail," he said—"'ceptin' o' course, the little woman."

"I'LL be glad to try," said Truax simply.

He sat across from a slender girl with great masses of wavy hair, and long-lashed dark eyes, whose delicate finger traced the route across the crude map that Harvey Hartigan had scrawled in his letter home, a day or two before his death.

Northward the trail led, then sharply east and north again. Truax scrutinized it keenly.

"Scrub spruce for the most part," he said. "I know some of the country. It's a five-days' trek. But if it's there we'll get it!"

Shyly the girl slipped her hand across the table, and the young prospector crunched it in his big fist. Then because he couldn't

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think of an appropriate remark, he strode hurriedly across the room and out into the frosty air.

A goodly turnout of the idly curious saw them off. The fame of the Blue Wolf was the biggest attraction. Then there was the piquant beauty of the girl, and the strangeness of the quest. In the outskirts of the crowd Farrington and a little swarthy man watched the departure. They conferred afterward, in the rear of the Golden Ghost.

"Your dogs will do it?" asked the gambler, in conclusion.

"Sure t'ing. Dose malemiut ain' beat no tam'."

"Four o'clock then. Terms sixty-forty, with the girl and that blue devil thrown in on my end. Truax doesn't count. If the gold story is a fake—and I think it is—I'll pay you one hundred dollars a day, for your time."

THE snow glittered a strange greenish blue in the play of the hissing aurora. Against the spiked tops of the dwarfed spruce the flickering pennons of light danced in a mighty beckoning arc. The snow crunched under foot, drifted in mighty corrugated ridges hard as sand.

At the head of the team, his slate-colored pelt shimmering in the weird light, the Blue Wolf trotted briskly. Despite the leisurely pace, the unbroken trail had been "heavy going." Some of the other dogs were actually weaving in the traces, and their footprints were marked with dull splotches.

Bundled up on the sleigh, where Truax had insisted that she ride for the last six miles, Edith Hartigan stared into the chill luminous night sky, and drank deep of the frozen grandeur of the scene. Away off to the right, mellowed by the distance, came the eery quavering lilt of the wolf pack. The dogs heard it, and the hair on their necks stirred and stiffened. Truax called a halt.

"We'll camp here," he said.

Eagerly the girl assisted in unharnessing the dogs, who had gotten over their earlier hostility. Skirts were new things, and delicately perfumed hair newer, but the sage conclusion had been reached that they weren't bad medicine.

The girl had so far broken down the Blue Wolf's barrier of frigid reserve, that the huge leader even made tentative efforts to lick her face as she struggled with the frozen moosehide. Truax was amazed at the friendliness of the blue husky. The huge leader was ordinarily undemonstrative even to his master.

They camped in a finger of spruce forest that stretched from the valley well up the side of the mountain. Truax so constructed the girl's lean-to shelter, that it cut off the light of the fire from the back trail. Up the slope, where the snow gleamed blue and iridescent, like powdered diamond its lurid light might have been visible. But the timber line is low in Alaska, and men for a diversity of reasons, dislike to travel above it. Across the valley, the thickness of the spruce utterly concealed it. Truax was well satisfied.

After the meager meal the girl snuggled into her fox-faced sleeping-bag, in the pungent shelter of the spruce-thatched lean-to. Truax cast his own down on the other side of the fire, but sat up smoking until the girl's regular breathing assured him that she was asleep. The dogs had burrowed beneath the crust of frozen snow.

In the stillness he could hear the faint crackle of the northern lights, red and green and shimmering purple. More imminent was the snapping of the frost-chilled spruce branches. He set his feet in the narrow Cree snow-shoes, swung his rifle over his shoulder, and struck out into the gloom of the forest.

Southward he trended, and then westward. On his left there reared the jagged wall of crackling spruce, while to his right, the shimmering glittering snow, a bluish-green on his exhausted retina, stretched away in frozen leagues beyond the black fingers of forest fringe, toward the trackless Arctic circle.

They were off the beaten paths, he knew, and surmised that a line drawn straight to the pole might not intersect a single fresh trail of dogs and men.

That made the fact that there was another outfit on the back trail, the more alarming. He had realized it only that afternoon. Blue Wolf and the other huskies had turned in an expectant semicircle at every breathing-place, to stare curiously past him, to the forest fringe beyond.

The prescience of the true sourdough had read the signs correctly. He did not doubt that to their ears even the hissing of the sleigh runners was audible. But the trail

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twisted erratically along the lines of least grade, and he had seen and heard nothing of those who trailed him. Now he proposed to find out.

After a detour of a mile or more, he was rewarded with the faint glow of red through a fringe of spruce at a sharp bend in the trail. More cautiously he approached. He was walking on the edge of a dwarfed ridge, and in his eagerness to gain a vantage point, he trusted himself upon the projecting ledge of frozen snow. It was his undoing.

There rose a sharp hissing sound, and tons of tumbling snow seemed to engulf him as the miniature slide roared through the scrub spruce. He floundered out in a circle of hostile, yellow-faced huskies, to stare past them into the threatening muzzle of a Winchester. Across the fire a swarthy saturnine countenance leered at him.

"Ah, by gar we 'ave dose han'some veestor, eh?" he jeered. "Mebbeso 'e come to call on poor Antoine, eh?"

Truax stared about him in helpless chagrin. The half-breed was sitting in the shadow of a lean-to, but the ruddy light on his face revealed with striking clearness, the cruel predatory features of his lean countenance. His own rifle and one snow-shoe had been lost in the slide. He edged nearer the blaze. Antoine Tesreaux hitched his rifle forward with a warning scowl.

"Don' go fer mek any crooked move," he cautioned, "or by God ze wolverines will nubble your ribs!"

"I haven't got a gun," said Truax testily. "And I'd like to get warm."

The other's sneering assurance returned.

"Sure t'ing," he invited. "Eef mebbeso m'sieu 'ave come by dose trail, eenstead of snek tru zee wood, 'e would 'ave not so mooch snow on 'ees face and clo'es."

The white man wasn't disposed toward idle argument. He surmised that the breed was acting as driver for some one else. Tesreaux was admittedly one of the best dog handlers in the hills.

"Where's your partner?" queried Truax abruptly.

Tesreaux grinned.

"Ees go like you 'ave, for spik to his frands up ze trail. Mebbeso 'es talk with zee pretty girl, eh? Farrington 'e say she pretty —— nice squaw."

The blunder that had left the girl helpless in the hands of the prowling gambler and dance-hall habitué, turned Truax sick at heart. He stood directly across the blaze from the half-breed, in torturing heat.

Abruptly one of his heavy Siberian boots plowed through the fire, spraying the disconcerted Tesreaux with flaming embers. In another instant he had hurdled the blaze and fallen with his full weight upon the smaller man. The rifle roared once, but its charge went whinning futilely over the treetops.

Truax's fist shot in twice for the jaw, and the cursing struggling figure beneath him relaxed. The white man stood up with the acrid smell of burning fur and wool in his nostrils. He brushed off the glowing coals that the force of his fall had enmeshed in his coat, and whisked other coals off the unconscious half-breed. Then he searched the camp for firearms. A Colt .45 in a holster, was confiscated along with the half-breed's rifle.

The yellow-faced huskies watched the whole struggle with grinning interest, but without active hostility or interference. He recognized a little blaze-faced fellow as the half-breed's famous leader. Leveling the gun, he fired. "Scoonah Jack" leaped into the air, and fell, kicking convulsively. In a moment his teammates were on him, rending the dying dog's flesh from the bone.

Truax shook his erstwhile captor into groaning consciousness and pointed toward the snapping, snarling dogs.

"There's your lead dog," he explained crisply. "I guess you won't make any more trailing records on this trip. And all the guns in camp are in my possession, including my own, which I have just kicked out of the snow-drift. With three hours' grace, you're due to hit the back trail. If you haven't commenced mushing then, I'll start firing from the ridge above. If Farrington's nosing around our camp, he may or may not accompany you. But don't lose any time."

He readjusted his snow-shoes with a wary eye upon the cursing, sobbing breed.

"Its too bad about Scoonah Jack," he said, in slightly milder accents. "But your trip up here is bad medicine from beginning to end. You want Hartigan's cache, and it happens that it belongs by prior title, to the young lady who accompanies me. Maybe Farrington wants a shot at Blue Wolf or me, to even up the Fitz affair."

His jaw set grimly, and he started crunching the snow on the return trip.

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"If he does," he added half to himself, "He's just about due for the chance!"

ONCE secure from Tesreaux's prying scrutiny, he hurled the half-breed's rifle far out into the underbrush. Then with his pale face flexed in tense lines of apprehension for the helpless girl, he set out in long expert strides. Several times he paused and listened.

Faintly on the breeze, came the lilt of the hunting wolf pack, over in the Rabbit River country. Somewhere nearer other dogs were yapping, but whether they were the yellow-faced huskies or his own team, he could not tell.

After every pause he would make greater exertion to decrease the remaining distance. The stillness was oppressive, menacing. Save for the crackling of the snow and the faint purr of the dancing light pennons of the aurora, he could hear no sound. The trilling yelps of the wolf pack had died away in greater distance, and the noise of the huskies' snarling contention had ceased. Ahead of him broke the red flare of the camp-fire. It was blurred in mighty shadows by the dogs which trotted back and forth.

His anxiety took on a keener edge. Why were the dogs aroused? Soon there came to his ears a faint sound, as of some one sobbing. He broke into a shuffling run and crashed through the last barrier of red cedar brush.

The lurid flare from the replenished fire lit with almost daylight distinctness, every feature of the little camp. In her white otter furs, attired as if for traveling, sat the girl. Her head was bowed in her arms, and her slender figure was shaken with convulsive sobs.

Truax's startled gaze swept the other details. Quietly the dogs sat watching him, all save the great shimmering figure of Blue Wolf. He reclined at the girl's side, and Truax noted that her slender hand clutched the long hair of the great malemiut's neck.

Then he understood. Directly in the trail in front of him was the sprawling figure of a man. The snow was trampled, and spattered with strange patches, blue-black in the moonlight. He went over and placed his hand on the girl's shoulder. She shrank away with a startled scream. Then relief kindled in the wide frightened eyes.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, "I thought that—that something had happened—to you!"

"Something has happened to you!" he replied quietly. "Please tell me."

Brokenly, still trembling with terror, the girl told him.

"I woke up," she said. "Some one was shaking me. It was a strange face—leering at me—frightfully. For a moment I hardly knew where I was. Then I remembered—and recognized him. He was the man who laughed at my map—back in camp—and still persisted in his—hateful attentions. He was dreadfully excited. He cursed terribly—told me to get on my trail togs—that I had to go with him!

"'Your friend,' he said, 'will make a —— fine target.' I was frightened almost to death. The dogs sat around quietly. I didn't see Blue Wolf. I wondered where you were. Farrington was very nervous.

"But the more I pleaded and begged, the more enraged he became. He knew I was stalling for time. Then I refused, flatly, to go. He cursed frightfully, and advanced threateningly. And then, over his shoulder, I caught a glimpse of Blue Wolf. He was standing in the shadow of the underbrush, with one foot curled up, after that funny habit of his. He was just the faintest outline in the purple shadows. But his big green eyes blazed like—like stars.

"I wondered if it would—make any difference. He didn't join the other dogs, and that seemed rather strange. I backed away from Farrington. He came over toward me, with his eyes glittering beneath his frosted brows. I didn't have a gun—I've never shot one in my life.

"I don't suppose it would have done any good anyway. But I pleaded and coaxed and begged, until he suddenly realized that I was killing a lot of time.

"'If you won't come willingly,' he said, 'you'll come anyhow. I want to be under cover when Truax comes sneaking back.'

"I attempted to run into the brush, but he caught me. I tried to scream, and his great hands closed over my mouth. Then I heard an abrupt rasping roar, almost in my ear. Farrington's gun went off, with a blinding flare, and I guess I fainted. When I came to, he was lying there—in the trampled snow, still—awfully still! Blue Wolf was lying beside me, calmly enough, staring up at the gleaming aurora. Then—then you came!"

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THE long-awaited "give way" blast blared harshly from the raucous whistle of the *Kadiak King*. The great steel hull vibrated to the sudden play of the single screw, churning the green water astern into an agitated cream. The dock, with its gaily colored, whooping, waving throng, swept past, and was left a vague kaleidoscopic smudge, astern.

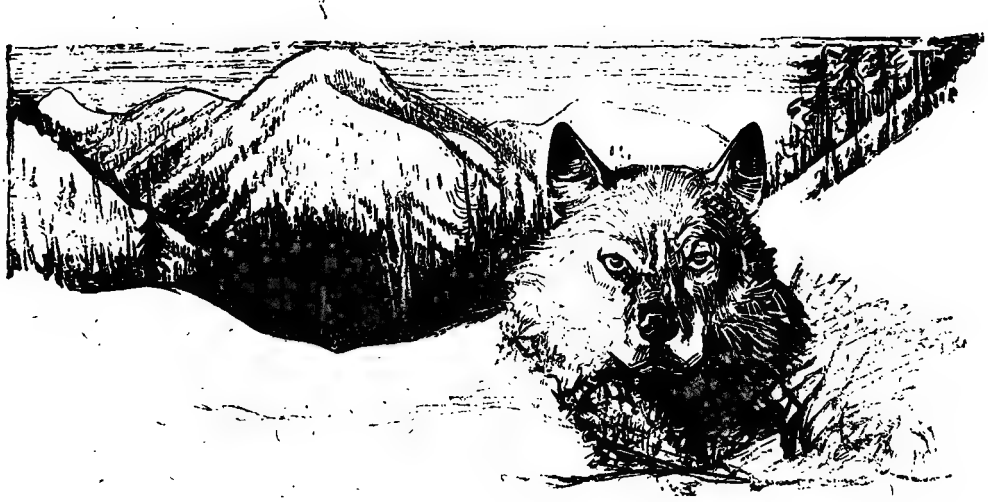
About me thronged and jostled an excited crowd. Lean bronzed miners, still in the gaudy mackinaws and fur caps of the creeks, pompous capitalists in swallow-tailed coats, outgoing Government employees, army officers, school-teachers, clamoring children —the strange nondescript assemblage that the "inside passage" boats invariably book. Upon every face, from the oldest sourdough to the crassest *chechahco*, was the rapt delight of those bound for the "outside."

They ceased cheering, and drifted away in little groups. The afterdeck was almost clear. At the taffrail three figures claimed my eager attention. A tall, bronzed young man was standing very close to a slender girl. They were looking back over the wake of the *Kadiak King* a shimmering ribbon of molten gold in the afternoon sunlight.

Beside them, fully as tall as the girl, stood a great shaggy blue dog, his forepaws on the railing, and his wistful gaze turned toward the dimming blur that marked the last of the Alaskan hills.

They were a striking trio. Jimmie Trelton, beside me, explained in a voice husky with excitement:

"Ain't she a pippin? Newlyweds too! There's some sorta story about her an' him findin' a half a ton er so, of cached gold, 'way back up in the Rabbit Rapids country. Sounds fishy! But if I had that girl an' the blue malemiut, I wouldn't give a —— if I didn't have a sou markee!"



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The Six Silk Shirts of Silver Sam

by J·ALLAN DUNN

Author of "From the Seas," "Rotorua Rex," etc.

THIS is not an attempt to parody the slippery sibilation of the ditty concerning Sister Susie and her efforts in behalf of shirtless soldiers; it is the plain, unvarnished tale of something that really happened. The title was inevitable.

Sam's nickname had nothing to do with the metal once so extolled by an ex-Secretary of State. Apparently Nature had started out to make an albino of Sam—whose second name was Shipley—and had relented, limiting his freakishness to his hair which, coming in white on his infantile poll, refused to darken as it gradually grew to an aggressive pompadour. A specialist, consulted by him on a trip to Kansas City with two carloads of husky Herefords, told him the pigmentary cells were missing.

Sam was in love at the time. He had seen a girl on the train and the fact that this was *the* girl had hit him all at once and effectively like a man falling over a cliff. Sam's *amours* were of the hardy annual variety, and hitherto they had been largely one-sided. It wasn't his nickname he worried over so much as the fear the girl was going to laugh at him the first time he took off his hat to her. You see he hadn't spoken to the girl yet. That was Sam's way, to surrender his heart at a glance, love first and acquaintance afterward. Usually it stopped before Sam got acquainted, thereby preserving his ideals.

Sam's hair is a part of the story or I wouldn't write so much about it. Anyhow, the specialist couldn't do anything with it. Sam wouldn't stand for dyeing it, and a wig was out of the question, so he settled down to being joshed about it by strangers and wore his hat practically all the time he was awake, except when he was among pals. And he didn't forget the girl.

As to the shirts, Sam acquired them from the combination of an advertisement in the Agua Caliente *Sentinel* and the overnight acquisition of two more jacks after he had opened a well-sweetened pot on a lone pair.

Sam was the same as ninety-nine cowrangers out of a hundred. When he had money his main ambition was to get rid of it. As he happened to have some left the next morning by reason of the game keeping up all night, the announcement of the Chicago merchant that he would send, "by express, inspection permitted, six all-silk, satisfaction guaranteed, specially selected shirts, assorted or plain, worth fifty dollars, for twenty dollars—cash or money order. This offer, "good for thirty days only," was an inspiration godsent to the relief of Sam's plethoric pocketbook.

The shirts arrived and were accepted. They were a bit slimsy of weave. Sam's particular crony, Sody-water Jim Herron, affirmed his opinion that they were made of a "refined variety of muskeeter nettin'," but Sam's nature had been soured since his

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allegiance to the water wagon, and what the shirts lacked in substance they more than made up in pattern. Even Jim admitted that.

Sam had recklessly ordered without specifying assorted or plain and, at first glimpse, the box looked like the samples of a wall-paper drummer specializing in country hotel bedrooms. The three lower garments were plain, one crimson, one yellow as a new quarantine flag and one mercifully white.

"I can't wear the red one on the range," said Sam as he displayed them to Sody-water Jim in the main room of the ranch-house. "I'll wear it over to Cheyenne next week when I ride Diablo."

Diablo was the meanest horse in fifty-three counties and for two years had constituted the supreme test for aspirants at the Cheyenne Cowboy Carnival.

"Betteh wear yo' coat till yo're mounted," said Jim. "Ef thet hawss eveh sees that strip of sunset he'll be worse locoed than he is now, which is talkin' some."

"I'm goin' to wear it," said Sam, who was a bit of a dandy in a way, despite his sensitiveness about that hair of his; and Jim, being an underling, subsided.

Sam was the owner of the O. U. Ranch, and Sody-water Jim his foreman, friend and general adviser. The title of the ranch had nothing to do with Sam's credit, which was good. The name had been acquired with the purchase of the property and the registered brand. It wasn't the biggest ranch in Wyoming, at that, but it paid.

"I ain't much on silk shirts myself," said Jim, "but they're O. K. for them thet likes 'em. They look gay, they make a feller feel gay, an' gen'lly he winds up by gettin' gay. To me they've allus bin hoodoos. Last time I started out with a silk shirt was in Denver and I woke up in a strait-jacket. That was just afore I swore off."

"Far be it from me to start you to drinkin' ag'in," said Sam. "Licker an' you allus reminds me of the combination of a cigareet stub an' a bucket of gasoline. So I won't giv' ye the one I was aimin' to. Wait till I put away the lingery an' I'll ride over to Dry Crick with you an' take a look at them yearlin's."

SO IT came to pass that in the final heat of the bronco-busting contest, the crimson shirt, the first of the six to meet the public eye as it adorned the broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped body of Silver Sam, made a cheery, conspicuous spot of color in the arena as Sam, astride of Diablo, welded the grip of his sturdy knees into the horse's withers and shouted to the attendants to take off the blinders.

The crimson shirt lost form and became the fiery center of an animated human-equine pinwheel, the hub of Diablo's concentrated, centripetal endeavor to get rid of his unwelcome rider in the shortest possible time. Afterward, if he got a chance, to stamp him to pulp or bite an arm off him.

The judges had narrowed the contest down to Silver Sam and a competitor from Utah, slanderously known as Mormon Rivers. The latter had managed to stay with Diablo for twenty nerve-tearing, tendon-twisting minutes the day before, riding grimly without flourish, but sticking to his saddle like a burr to a ewe's tail until Diablo sulked. If Sam could duplicate the feat it was generally conceded that the national title would be his, for Sam rode in slashing fashion that provided the spectacle the crowd, largely professional in activity or interest, loved.

There was nothing that Diablo—meanest horse in fifty-three counties—did not know about the ungentle art of dehorsing. Bucking, pitching, weaving, sunfishing, rearing, falling, all the various evolutions of untamable equinity were stowed away in that coffin-shaped head, backed by a will of iron and sinews of steel.

After the first furious wheel, with the judges peering through the dust-cloud to see if Sam grabbed for leather, a cheer went up for horse and rider as the two jerked across the field propelled by the vigorous bucks of Diablo, fighting every inch of the way. The two were one—a modern centaur, Sam's thighs tight to the saddle, his crimson-clad torso swaying to the heave and snap and swing of Diablo's supple body of black satin, flecked here and there with foam, glistening with sweat that had not yet commenced to streak.

Sam's hair above his tanned face and neck, where the crimson shirt was open, was the high light of the picturesque combination.

"Oh, you ol' Silver Tip! Oh, you Silver Sam!" shouted his friends composing the majority of the stands and the larger portion of the bets.

Sody-water Jim, standing at the foot of the grand stand, sharing his attention be-

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tween Sam and two pretty girls in the lowest tier, exuberantly announced his confidence in winning the wagers he had placed of every available two-bit piece.

"*Eyah-yah!* Watch 'im ride! Look at that limber-legged, center-fire, son-of-a-gun ride. *Eh-yah-yippy!*"

Diablo, seemingly intent upon plunging through the underpinning of the stand, reversed with a whirl too swift for even the cameras to catch and, raging at his firmly seated rider, tried to swallow foot, stirrup and *tapadera*. Foiled at that, he stood on his forelegs, his indignant breath puffing up the dust, then lunged back and reared, pawing the air, reared till the crowd gasped, and came to solid earth again with a jarring crash of rigid pasterns.

Sam bowed to the cheers, face to the stands once more. His face was flushed, not so much by his exertions as his knowledge of a catastrophe which must inevitably be revealed when he turned his back.

Diablo's plunges had been too much for the flimsy material of the shirt. It had ripped at the yoke in half a dozen places. One sleeve was loose at the shoulder, he was conscious of the breeze playing along his spine and of fluttering tags and rags at yoke and belt line. He resolved to spur Diablo to swift resentment, escape in the dust and keep as close to the center of the arena as he could until Diablo surrendered.

He had little fancy for any change of sobriquet, and he knew the rapid gossip of the range. If some wit should take it into his shallow pate to dub him "Shirtless Sam" he would never shake it off. Half a dozen states were represented in the stand, and then there were the moving-pictures.

Diablo, smitten with a sudden frenzy, commenced to sunfish, his back in a Gothic arch, coming down stiff-legged for another twisting bound.

Sam sat his saddle easily, his thighs as much a part of his mount as that enraged animal's own ribs. If his shirt *was* spoiled he had got the championship. He exulted in the glory of the combat and the knowledge of the worthiness of his own thews. The dust hid the disaster from the crowd as long as Diablo kept the action up.

He dug his spurs into the horse's flanks, and the black went rocketing across the field, squealing defiance and shaking his head in rage. Sam fanned him with his hat and slapped his flanks in derision. Diablo had been temporarily mastered before, but never by such a post-graduate of insult. He could not understand the words, but he sensed the scornful tone of Sam's epithets as slurs upon his appearance and ancestry. Meanwhile, try as he might, his strength was slowly ebbing.

He flung himself sideways to the ground in desperation, hoping to pin the man in the fall and then to roll on him and mash him. He had tried the trick before successfully. But when the dust cleared, the excited crowd saw Sam astride the prostrate Diablo and saw the dab of crimson flaunt triumphant from the saddle as the black struggled to his feet, to stand breathless, quivering, lungs striving for air, nostrils agape, eyes staring, beaten.

The judges started to ride up and give the signal that would announce the championship. Sam, still wary, awaited them. He could slip under the stand and borrow another shirt somewhere, or a coat, in which to receive the prize, he figured.

Diablo, despondent at his weakness, but still dauntless, felt some measure of strength returning as his laboring lungs began to use their full capacity once more. He gave one last, sudden, despairing buck. He felt the instinctive tightening of Sam's leg grip and groaned at the failure of his maneuver.

Then, to the distress of most of the crowd and the delight of the minority, they saw the just-about-to-be-crowned champion reel in midair, turning with his saddle, and pitch ignominiously to the ground, shoulder first, while Diablo, kicking at the gear that slid from his back, around his stomach and between his hindlegs, loped off pursued by half a dozen lariat-swinging cowboys.

HIS bridle recovered, the treacherous saddle on his shoulder, Sam disconsolately sought Sody-water Jim and found his friend had deserted the spot where he had left him. The fickle crowd was yelling for the victorious man from Utah. Second money was coming to Sam, but, bruised and shaken in body and spirit, he scorned a public application for the prize that consoled defeat.

Their own horses were halter-tied beneath the stand. His coat, neatly rolled, was fastened to his saddle and Sam put it on before renewing his search for his foreman.

A voice hailed him and he looked up to see Jim's rueful grin between the faces of

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two girls, though one of them he but dimly realized as present, enthralled as he suddenly was by a pair of blue eyes above scarlet lips upturned at the corners—there was a little pendule in the upper lip he noticed—framed by hair brown in the shadow, burnished gold in the light, a face made for smiles and laughter, tempered just now by sympathy. It was the girl he had seen on the train to Kansas City!

"Tough luck, Sam," said Sody-water Jim. "What was it? Cinch busted?"

"Ring broke clean in half," explained Sam. "Can't understand it. Must hev had a flaw in it! 'Course it had to choose this time to break, after me ridin' that saddle for six years."

He held up for inspection the broken iron ring that had held the end of the cinch.

"I never knew sich a thing ter happen afore," said Jim. "I told ye silk shirts was hoodoos, Sam."

Sam shrugged his shoulders. He wanted to look at the girl some more, but she had already flushed under his gaze. Now she spoke.

"That was hard luck," she said. "It's a shame you lost the championship. I think you rode beautifully!"

Sam's face and what could be seen of his shirt beneath his coat were exactly the same hue. Politeness struggled with sensitiveness, and the former won. He took off his hat and waited for a start of surprise, a smile of amusement from the girl. Her face was unchanged. There was not even a widening of the eyelids. A giggle came from the other side of Jim, but he recked it not. Fumbling the brim of his Stetson in his hands, he found his voice.

"Thank ye, miss," he stammered.

A shrill cry came from higher up the now emptying stand, and the girls wheeled to meet the beckon of an elderly woman standing beside a man whose gray beard cascaded over a generous stomach.

"There's Ma an' Pa," said Sam's divinity. "Good-by. I'm so sorry you lost."

Sam waited till Jim joined him, and walked over to the steward's office to get his prize-money in a dream. Still mazy he mounted and rode back to town astride his now mended saddle beside his foreman.

"I allus said silk shirts was hoodoos," said Jim. "Last time I wore one——"

"Who were those girls you were talking to?" asked Sam.

"Them? They're the Barton gals. Their old man's bought the place down on the bottoms, south end of Thompson's place. Goin' to raise goats. He's a crank, they tell me. But the girls are beauts. Specially the one on my right."

The one who had spoken had stood on Jim's left. Thompson's was only five miles from O. U. headquarters—and she had not laughed at his hair.

"Reckon mebbe you lost the end of yore tongue when you flopped?" suggested Jim at the end of ten minutes' silence. "What you-all goin' to do tonight? I'm flat. Lost sixty-seven dobies when that ring busted."

"I'll loan you half my prize money," said Sam. "What am I goin' to do? Well, first thing I'm goin' to change my shirt."

"Don't put on another silk one. I tell you, they're allus——"

But Silver Sam had put his pony to a lope. He was wondering if the Bartons would stay in Cheyenne overnight.

THE Bartons apparently joined the general exodus from Cheyenne that last night of the carnival. If they stayed, Sam failed to find them. As the search grew more hopeless he wandered into places that were inevitable disappointments before he entered them. Despite Jim's croaking he sported another of the six silk shirts, the star of them all, one of the assorted.

The pattern was a bad imitation of a modernist drop-curtain. It apparently represented a flock of purple cantaloups struck by lightning. It struck awe into the hearts of all observers and temporarily mussed up their eyesight. Between the shirt, the broken saddle-ring and the spending of his roll, Sam relegated the memory of the girl to a more suitable time and place, realizing that the spotlight of publicity was upon him.

Jim drank soda-water until his eyes overflowed and sputtered with the carbonated discharge; and Sam drank whisky, not because he liked it particularly, but because it was the proper thing to do and because everybody else was doing it. Under its influence he forgot the aggressive pallor of his hair; he became a wit, a teller of rare tales, the equal of every man, and his friend.

His physique offset the toxin and his brain responded to the quickening ferment in his blood and veins. Jim marveled at him; he could see that. Also Jim was en-

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vious; that was plain enough in his continuous suggestions to him to go to bed. To go to bed, when his star was in the ascendant!

"You're loco'd, plumb loco'd, Jim," he told his foreman, standing with his back to the bar, his arm about the shoulders of a man with a pasty face, shifty eyes, and the mouth of a catfish. "Me an' my friend, we aim to make a night of it. You got to meet my fr'en', Jim. This's Whitey Lawton. His hair's same color as mine and we're pals. You can go home if you like. This is no place for a sober man."

He was right, Jim decided, looking over the crowd of exuberant cowmen. But he hated to leave his boss with Whitey Lawton of the catfish mouth and the white hair. It was not the same hair as Sam's. Whitey's was devitalized from dissipation; and Sam's thatch, blanched as it was, was vibrantly alive. He had no fear but that Sam could take care of himself, but he ventured a last remonstrance.

"Betteh git ter bed befo' the hoodoo gets to workin' with that silk shirt," he said. "You know——"

"I'll pull yore own shirt plumb oveh yore head an' smother you in it if you-all don't vamose," said Sam good-naturedly, but in drunken earnest. "Hoodoo nothin'! This is my lucky night. An' I'm goin' to foller it."

He turned toward the end of the room where the gaming tables were in full blast, his arm still entwined about the form of Whitey Lawton.

"I've got a new way of playin' the wheel," Sam announced as they reached the table. "You take a pair of dice an' flip 'em." He suited the action to the word. "It's a two an' a six. Twenty-six. That's in the third dozen. Five bucks on the third dozen, one buck on twenty-six and one on even. Now watch her roll."

By some coincidence of chance the ball fell into the compartment marked 26, and the crowd gaped as Sam gathered up his spoils. The luck was with him. In free-handed fashion he staked his new-found friend and Whitey followed his lead. Sometimes the numbers turned up, almost invariably the dozens columns paid them three to one and Sam's chips grew with the lengthening of the roulette-twirler's face.

The crowd gathered deep about them. The proprietor of the gambling tables ousted his man at the wheel but could not break the run of Sam's luck. At last he tossed the ball into his cash drawer.

"I'm through," he announced. "Game's closed till tomorrow. Cash in, friend."

Sam collected four thousand three hundred dollars in chinking eagles and double-eagles. Whitey Lawton had stopped an hour before, content with smaller profits, expecting Sam's luck to break. Now Sam linked Whitey's arm in his and tossed ten clinking twenties on the bar.

"Champagne for the crowd!" he cried. "Tonight my name's 'Golden Sam.'"

The crowd cheered as the corks popped and Sam tied up his gains in a canvas sack the proprietor offered.

"Better leave it in the safe, friend," the latter cautioned.

"Not me," laughed Sam. "I'm goin' to take it to bed with me so's I can see it first thing in the mo'ning an' know I ain't been dreamin'. Come on, pardner—" he slapped Whitey Lawton on the shoulder—"le's go to bed. Where's best hotel?"

"You can't get a bed nowheres tonight," said Whitey, "if you ain't got one already. Better come along with me to the Rodeo House. I got a room there."

"You're a real pal," said Sam. "Come on."

THE little room was full of buzzing flies and hot sunlight when Sam awoke and gazed at the cracked plaster of the ceiling. His head felt as if it had been split with a hatchet and the gap was opening and closing with sickening regularity. Recollection gradually assembled in his brain-cells, still fumed with alcohol.

He felt under the mattress for a canvas sack that should be there containing four thousand one hundred gold dollars, enough to build a modern addition to the ranch-house, enough to take a honeymoon to . . .

The sack was not there! His head hurt abominably. The buzz of the flies sounded like a trombone medley, slightly off key.

"——!" he ejaculated. "I knew I was jest dreamin'."

But his headache, once registered by consciousness, refused to let him sleep. Little by little the events of the night came back to him and, in their full enlightenment, he sat up, winced, determinedly got a pair of legs that didn't seem to belong to the rest of his body over the edge of the bed and looked around.

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The room was empty, to all intents and purposes bare. There were two dingy sheets, a dingier cotton blanket and a spotty counterpane on the bed, a decrepit chair, a broken-down table with a basin and cracked pitcher; that was all. No clothes on the chair, no shoes under the bed, no Whitey Lawton, no silk shirt—and no money. A closer search revealed the sole articles of clothing: a pair of grimy white cotton socks spotted with red disks almost as large as the chips at the roulette table.

In despair he tried them on. They were too small for him.

A step sounded in the hall. He wrapped himself in the worn blanket, striped in brown and yellow, and poked his head gingerly into the passage. A forlorn man in overalls and an undershirt was carrying a pail, a mop and a broom.

"Hist!" said Sam, and beckoned.

The man shuffled to the door.

"Thought you'd never git up," he said. "Your friend said to let you sleep."

"Oh, he did, did he? What time did he leave?"

"About six this morning."

"What time is it now?"

"Little after one. He said you didn't want to wake up too soon."

"He was right," said Sam grimly. "I'm sorry I did. Listen. Are you busy?"

"Just got your room to do up," said the bed-maker.

"Never mind that. You cut along to the Star Livery Barn. My horse is there an' my foreman's Jim Herron. My name's Sam Shipley. He won't leave town till I show up. You see him if you can, or leave word for him to come up here *pronto*. There's money in it for you, if you hurry."

"Watch me slide," said the man, and shuffled off.

Sam relaxed on the bed and gave himself up to the blissful occupation of stringing invectives to suit the situation. He had almost exhausted both vocabulary and imagination when Jim arrived.

"Gee! but you millyunaires sleep late," said Jim. "I bin huntin' fer you all over. Had ha'f a mind to get the sheriff to help me."

As he spoke his eyes roved over the room, centering at last upon Silver Sam, hunkered up on the mattress, the striped blanket drawn about his neck. A slow grin spread over the face of Sody-water Jim, like a film of oil over the surface of a pool, as he took in the situation.

"Took your shirt too, did he?" he snickered. "I told you they was a hoodoo——"

Sam reached for the water-pitcher and poised it.

"Don't you assault me," said Jim, "or I'll leave you an' you'll have to parade through the streets the way you are. You look like a Ute chief on the war-path, with that blanket."

"You go get me some clothes," said Sam, "or I'll strip you off an' leave you here with this pair of spotted socks."

"All right," answered his foreman. "I'm off. What kind of a shirt—a silk one?"

The water-pitcher smashed and splashed against the swiftly closing door.

"THEY'RE a funny crowd, the Bartons—that is, the old folks," said Jim to his boss as they rode visiting from the O. U. headquarters one sunny Sunday afternoon. "You don't need to imagine that we-all are goin' to be given the high sign of welcome or asked to stay to supper. Old Barton was a schoolmaster, they tell me, who lost his health pronouncin' words that was never intended to be spoke, jest read. He aims to raise goats. He's got a flock of two hundred Angoras, figgers they'll clean the place of underbrush an' fertilize it at the same time. Meanwhile he grows fruit in the bottomland by the crick, shears the grown-up goatees for wool an' sells the young kids for Spring lamb."

"Not such a crazy scheme at that," replied Sam. "They's money in goats."

"He's got mine," said Jim. "He's got the disposition of a cross-eyed billy-goat himself. Thinks Goddawmighty made him an' broke the mold. You an' me's heathens. Goes off moonin' in the hills ha'f the time and leaves the gals to look after the goats. He's got 'em all named after Greek oldtimers, philossifers—named 'em from A to Z with jawbreakers I can't remember, 'cept they all sound like the name of some disease I'm glad I ain't got."

"What's wrong with the old lady?" asked Sam.

"She's so mortal sorry she married, herself, she hates to see her gals tied up the same way. The feller that marries one of 'em has got to have his nerve with him an' be right smart on fixin' chances to talk private. The old folks don't hand you none."

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"Where'd you get all the dope, Jim?"

Jim reddened under his tan.

"I bin aroun' there some evenin's," he admitted. "Me an' Helen sneaks off once in a while."

"What's the other girl's name?"

"Marion. She's crazy to meet you. Honest. Helen says so. She says Marion met you on a train once."

He glanced at Silver Sam's face, which was imperturbable. To save it the latter broke into a lope. The fact that there were going to be obstacles between him and Marion—he liked the name, he'd have liked it if it had been Jezebel—did not discourage him. Sam was not bashful. Since she had not laughed at his hair, since she had said she was sorry he had lost the championship and—what was it she *did* say—"I think you rode beautifully," any hindrances in the way of love were only as a trumpet-call to his fealty. He drove the spurs into his astonished and indignant pony and galloped ahead, leaving Jim to eat his dust.

That worthy, choking in the sudden smother, smiled despite the stinging alkali.

"The boss has sure got it bad," he told himself. "It's lucky for him an' me he picked on Marion."

Presently they rode out on the low bluffs above the creek where the Barton holding was established. The house stood high on ground that sloped in terraces to the orchards in the rich bottom soil by the water. A fenced-in garden patch surrounded the house and they hitched their horses by the gate and went up with clinking spurs to the porch.

Mrs. Barton, sparse as a wind-blown pine, gave them scant welcome, tempered by the cordiality of her daughter Helen with whom Sody-water Jim soon gave evidence of being on signs of sparring intimacy. Sam looked in vain for Marion and, longing to ask for her, asked for Mr. Barton instead.

"He's somewhere," answered Mrs. Barton. "He's writing a book and he craves solitude. He'll likely be in after a bit."

"Writin' something about goats, mem?" queried Sam, trying to be amiable.

"Goats!" exclaimed his hostess in a voice where pride of her husband's achievement mingled with scorn for her visitor. "I should say not. He's writing the 'Influence of the Wyoming Fossils on Modern Civilization.' Mr. Barton used to be a professor before his health broke down."

Oppressed by the atmosphere of erudition, Sam echoed Mrs. Barton's sigh, and the conversation languished. They were alone in the room. Jim had asked for a drink of buttermilk, and giggles in the kitchen proclaimed that he and his fair one were making the most of their seclusion.

Mrs. Barton took up some knitting, clicking the needles together with an emphasis that suggested to Sam that she had an idea that she was jabbing them into him instead of the heel of the sock she was finishing. Occasionally she looked up at him and sniffed.

Sam became painfully conscious of the large size of his hands, the small area of his brain, the paralysis of his tongue and the pattern of his shirt. It was borne in upon him that the lady he had selected as his future mother-in-law did not approve of his taste in haberdashery.

He was contemplating a lame excuse for retreat when a shrill soprano shriek sounded from outside. Mrs. Barton sprang to her feet, dropped her knitting and ran to the window.

"That's Marion!" she cried. "She's mixed up with those plaguy goats again."

Sam was through the open door as the second shriek came up from the orchards, leaping down the terraced bluff to the rescue. At the second ledge he paused. Below him, on the dirt roof of a low building where prunes were drying in trays, stood the figure of his divinity, gazing apprehensively at the foot of the ladder by which she had gained safety from two long-horned goats of the male persuasion that stood with beards quivering with rage, blatting derisive taunts as they beat a nervous tattoo of fury with their feet.

"Stay there! I'll drive them off!" cried Sam valiantly.

The girl looked up, shouted something and waved her arms at him wildly. Sam vaguely heard words that sounded like, "Look out, they're all loose!" But they barely registered themselves when a mighty force struck him foully in the rear and catapulted him into space.

For a brief second he aviated; then a plum tree embraced him with a thousand clinging, scraping, rending clutches. Amid a shower of broken twigs, bombarded by falling prunes, he fell through the wreck of the tree to all fours, his silk shirt in tatters, his enemy in full blat, charging down upon him.

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Scrambling to his feet, he ignominiously gained the ladder, dodged the two horned fiends that guarded it, bewildered to temporary inaction at the abruptness of his appearance, sprang up the rounds and dropped prostrate on the roof, scattering the drying prunes at the feet of the girl he had sought to rescue.

There is nothing in the world of youth and manhood so poignant as the humiliation of ignominious failure to play the hero. When one is a lover to boot, it takes a first-class brand of mental stamina to hoist one's self from the depths of despair all the deeper because of ludicrous accompaniment.

Sam, prone amid the prunes, wished the roof would give way. If the goat had only butted him into the creek he would have crawled out and gone away—forever. He looked up at last.

The girl's face was crimson with suppressed laughter. It leaked out at her eyes and threatened to break through the pursed-up barricade of her lips. Sam sat up.

"Go ahead and laugh," he said. "Don't mind me. I'll join you in a minnit. I must have bin a scream."

The girl's pent-up emotion burst forth. She laughed until she cried and she sat down on the low parapet of the roof and tried to control her hysteria. Sam surveyed her in a rueful effort to attain her point of view. His hands and face were scratched, blood mingled with prune-juice on his forehead, his gray pants were blotched with purple, and his shirt was a wreck.

"I couldn't help it," gasped Marion Barton. "I'm sorry, but you—you—looked so funny." She went off into another peal of laughter.

"Wish I could have seen it," said Sam. "That animal of yours is sure there with the punch!"

The girl looked at him admiringly.

"You're certainly game," she said. "I hope Agamemnon didn't hurt you."

"Mostly in my feelings," he answered. "What did you say his name was?"

"Agamemnon. The two with him are Epictetus and Xenophon. Xenophon's the black-and-white one."

"Are those their reg'lar names," asked Sam, looking down at the three watchgoats at the foot of the ladder.

"Yes," she answered. "Father chose them."

"Do you call 'em—what you just said?"

She nodded.

"It's no wonder they get mad. I could suit 'em a heap better than that."

Her eyes danced.

"Yes?" she queried.

"But I won't. They didn't hurt you, did they? How'd they happen to be rampagin' round loose? They ought to be dehorned!"

Sam was still somewhat painfully conscious of the force of this last suggestion.

"No, I got up in time. Father must have left their gate open. He's absent-minded, you know."

Sam grunted involuntarily.

"I'm so sorry," she repeated.

"I'm not," said Sam gallantly and truthfully. "I'm glad I'm here."

Marion blushed. She was simply adorable at close range, Sam thought. Not a flaw about her.

"Your clothes are ruined," she said. "I'm afraid that silk shirt can't be mended. It's a shame!"

"It was some shirt," Sam admitted, "though it ain't much to look at now. Do you like the pattern?"

Marion parried.

"It must have been wonderful before it got torn," she said.

"I've got another almost like it. I'll wear it over some time—if you like. May I?"

Love builds his bridges of strange media. The girl's eyes filmed with shyness, then cleared, and something looked out of them that needed no words. To its signal Sam's heart wigwagged in a fluttering hurry of reply.

"I'd love to see it," she said.

The mutual glance held until the line of communication was firmly established, then wavered.

"How are we going to get down again?" she asked. "Dad's the only one who can handle them. And there are two more about somewhere."

"There's no hurry, is there?" answered Sam. "It ain't too hot for you up here?"

"Mother is having a fit. Tell your friend not to come down. They'll only chase him."

"Well, I'd like to have a turn at bein' audience myself," said Sam. "He might entice 'em off an' give us a chance. Jim's a good runner."

He looked toward the house where Mrs. Barton and Helen stood urging on the reluctant Jim to disaster. Sody-water advanced gingerly down the slope, a quirt in

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one hand and the rolling-pin that Mrs. Barton had thrust upon him in the other.

"Talk to 'em, Jim," suggested Sam. "Call 'em by name."

Jim said nothing but his eyes shot forth snappy, one-syllabled rejoinders. On the bluff his hostess shouted warning and advice. Agamemnon, Epictetus and Xenophon became interested and turned front to the new intruder. Round the corner of the building appeared two more, trotting nimbly to join the line-up for repulse.

"There's Achilles and Hector," said Marion with, it must be confessed, some of the same eagerness that invested maids and matrons in a Roman amphitheater just before the bolts of the cages were slid back.

Sam found the standpoint of spectator entirely agreeable.

"Look out, Jim!" he yelled as the loose soil slipped and Sody-water, sliding down toward the ten horns of his dilemma, scratched his frantic way up again, losing the rolling-pin in his haste.

The goats, warriors and philosophers alike, made a countercharge, gained the first line of trenches and stood looking after Jim in envy at his superior climbing abilities. Then they dropped back to headquarters at the ladder's foot.

"It's no use, Ma," called Marion from the roof. "We'll have to wait till Pa gets back. He always feeds them," she explained to Sam in a lower tone, "and they'll be getting hungry soon. Then he'll coax them away."

Sam reflected that appetites were not confined to goats, but he was too happy in the close company of Marion, despite his assurance of her mother's disapproval of the unchaperoned intimacy, to cavil at minor things. Besides, they were provisioned for a siege with the trays of drying prunes.

He seated himself by Marion's side, offered her a prune and sampled one himself.

"Your dad never gets lost, I suppose?" he asked hopefully, by way of starting the conversation.

"RECKON you'll admit them shirts of yours is a hoodoo now, won't ye?" asked Jim, as they rode home.

"I don't see where the hoodoo comes in," said Sam cheerfully, " 'cept where it worked out on itself."

"You notice we didn't get asked to supper, didn't ye?" said Jim, talking from his stomach. "An' the old gal's furious at you sittin' up there alone with Marion for two hours."

"Was it two hours?" asked Sam. "Seemed more like fifteen minutes to me." He had made good use of his time, he reflected cheerfully. "I don't see no hoodoo workin', Jim. I got three more shirts. I don't see where I'm damaged none."

"No?" said Jim. "No one 'ud guess it from the way you sit yore saddle."

SAM surveyed himself, by sections, in the flawed glass of his bureau, twisting his neck for a rear view. There was doubt in his mind, a dubious quality in his glance.

He was dressed in conventional cowman holiday attire. Polished boots with high heels and silver spurs, lavender trousers, trimly belted, a shirt finished off at the neck with a new handkerchief of black and a Stetson hat. It was the shirt that worried him. He had chosen a plain silk, plain as to pattern, though not to color. It was the yellow one of quarantine suggestion, a vivid, glaring, shouting yellow. Sam could not shake off a growing belief that it was a bit conspicuous, just the least trifle loud.

It was the Fourth of July when all the county rode to Steero, nine miles away, to generally celebrate. The Bartons were to be there and Sam's apprehension was not entirely on his own account. Marion's opinions by this time fenced in his horizon. He and Jim were to meet the family on the road.

Jim stuck his head in at the door.

"It's today's the Fourth, ain't it?" he queried. "I wasn't sure you didn't think it was tomorrer, time you're takin' to prink."

"Come here, Jim," demanded his boss. "How do you think this shirt looks?"

"Like the yolk of a fried egg," returned Jim promptly. "You won't never get lost in the crowd with that on. Makes you look sort of bilious, too, like you had the jaundice."

"I was afraid it did. I'll change it."

"They ain't no time. I was only joshing. It sure beats me though why you keep on wearin' them silk shirts. An' yeller's a sure hoodoo color."

"It don't look as bad with the neckerchief in front," said Sam, craning at the mirror. "I guess it goes. We're late now. We'll miss 'em if we don't get a move on."

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"Who's holdin'?" grumbled Jim as he mounted and rode after the impetuous Sam.

The Barton team, pulling the buckboard containing, in the front seat, the parents, in the rear the daughters, slackened the taut traces as they topped a rise and looked with inquisitively tilted ears toward an approaching dust-cloud. Mr. Barton, his patriarchal beard combed for the holiday, set the brake for the dip and clucked to the obedient horses.

Suddenly the team snorted. A spot of brilliant light was advancing upon them, the dust haloing about its brilliance. To their magnifying eyes it seemed as if the sun had left its orbit and was rushing along the road. Old Man Barton's "Whoas!" only increased their own fears and their contempt of his judgment.

To get away from the oncoming nebula of coruscating light, to wit, the yellow, silken shirt of Silver Sam, seemed the prime objective. The stout reins and check-bits stopped their flight to right or left. There was but one thing to do—bolt past the misplaced meteor.

With sudden lunges they simultaneously seized the bits in their teeth and bolted. The girls screamed as the buckboard swayed, Mrs. Barton lent her strength to the reins as she adjured the girls to sit still. Barton grabbed for the brake to set it up and, as he bent outward from the low floor of the buckboard, his long beard caught in the spokes of the nigh wheel.

Everything happened at once. There was a wail of agony from Barton, a shriek of sympathy from his family. Sody-water Jim spurred his pony across the road and seized one horse by the bridle while Sam attempted to still the frantic plunges of the other.

Sam, still struggling with the beast, saw the infuriated countenance of Barton glowering at him through the settling dust. Half of his beard was spun between the wheel-spokes, the rest draped raggedly the jaws that, forgetting the dead languages and the prescribed calm of professorship, told him in live American exactly what he thought of him—and his shirt.

Beyond Barton, Marion signaled him to say nothing, but to efface himself. The scornful searchlights of Mrs. Barton's eyes excoriated him and the voice of Jim emphasized the fact that he was emphatically *de trop*.

"It's your shirt that's sendin' 'em crazy," hissed his foreman. "Make a getaway—*pronto!*"

Sam gat. Steero and the Fourth of July program saw him not. Late in the evening Jim found him disconsolate, sucking an empty pipe on the corral fence of O. U. headquarters.

"I suppose I'm queered for all time?" he asked, after Jim had given him greeting.

"As fur as the old folks go you're about as popular as coal in hell," said Jim. "Barton swears you done it on purpose."

"And you, I s'pose, you are the curly-headed hero of the whole affair?"

"I was invited home to supper," answered Jim with quiet pride. "I jest come from there."

Sam groaned.

"I brought you a message," said Jim, relenting. "Marion said to tell you she might be ridin' along Sand Creek above Elk Ridge 'long about three, termorrer afternoon. I told her I thought I could spare you."

Sam ignored the pleasantry.

"She don't blame me, then?" he said.

"She blames that yeller shirt you was wearin'—like a sensible gal," said Jim. "*Now* p'r'aps you'll own up to the hoodoo."

"They's nothin' wrong with the shirts. It was the color of it. I'll admit it was kinder gay."

"Kinder gay! It 'ud make a circus-wagon look like a hearse alongside it. What did ye do with it?"

"I started to burn it," Sam admitted. "But Ah Fung got a glimpse of it and I gave it to him. He's promised not to wear it round the ranch. He's goin' to save it until he goes back to China, next year, to get married."

WHEN one gets, at the rarest of all moments, in thorough harmony with Nature, there is a period of exaltation, of divinity, of being thrilled by the touch of the Great Magician's wand. So it was with Silver Sam the night Marion stole out to meet him and told him that she loved him.

Obedient to the great primeval law of sex in its severest exactions, mating in perfect accord of body and spirit, they were filled with the elixir of life as with an essence, and the world hung poised in its flight for the space of a kiss.

When at length he rode away and Marion,

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covered by her sister's sympathetic watch, crept back to the sleeping house, Sam's pony was changed to a veritable Pegasus. They skimmed the sage-brush, floating between earth and sky, while the moon and the stars and Sam's soul all sang together the chant of life and its mysteries of passion and tenderness, parenthood and a moving part in the great play of Creation.

Marion had promised to marry him despite parental protest. The knowledge filled him with rapture, mingled with responsibility and the wonder of it all. Things that had seemed idle pastime he now cast aside as base, and loped on through the sage-scented air, charged with the spirit of his new manliness, insensible to direction or time.

He checked his pony at last on the ridge above the little town of Steero. A few lights gleamed in the main street from the saloons where men gambled and drank. The rest of the scattering houses lay dark and quiet beneath the moon. Sam was in no mood for company but his trail to the O. U. headquarters—henceforth to be known as home—led through the town and he loped downhill.

Through the maze of a hundred fanciful, hopeful visions he had come back to mundane things, and, remembering Jim, he laughed at that croaker's prophecy. Tonight, most wonderful of all nights, he wore the fifth of the six shirts—and where was the hoodoo? It was the last of the patterned quarter-dozen, its bizarre design conspicuous even by moonlight. It was warm even now, well after midnight, and he scorned his coat. As he bared his silver pompadour to the breeze he remembered what Marion had said about his hair an hour before while she had run her fingers through its crispness.

"I love it, Sam. Any one can have black hair, or brown or red, but yours is different. And it won't change, like mine will, when we grow old."

"You will always be young to me, honey," he had answered and set his lips to her fragrant locks.

Now his pony's hoofs beat a muffled tattoo down the main street. Every one was indoors, awake or asleep. At the verge of the town he passed the Last Chance Saloon. The door opened and the light threw a bar of radiance across the road. A man shouted "good night" to him and he waved back a greeting. His pony, knowing his nose was set for home, lengthened his stride and the bend of the cañon shut off the lights.

Sam shared the sleeping-chamber of the ranch-house with his foreman, but Jim's bunk was empty. Wondering a little, for he knew Sody-water had not been at Bartons', he turned in for the sleep that claimed him with promise of blissful dreams.

He was awakened by a pounding at the door. Thinking it was Jim, he opened it. Outside, dim in the starlight, lacking now the moon, was a group of horsemen. One of them held the pony of the man who had knocked. The latter spoke gruffly.

"Shipley?"

"That's my name. Come inside."

The man hesitated. He jerked his head and two men slipped from their saddles and passed through the door with him. Sam recognized the speaker for a deputy-sheriff of the county.

"If you'll wait till I slip on some duds," he said, "I'll find the whisky."

"Never mind the whisky," said the man, "but you can get your things on."

"Now," said Sam, returning from the bedroom where one of his visitors had lounged carelessly against the door while he dressed, "what's the idea?"

He had connected this night call with Jim's absence and wanted to get at the heart of the matter.

"That the same shirt you wore earlier tonight?" queried the deputy.

His tone stirred Sam's temper.

"Yes," he snapped in answer. "Why?"

"Johnson here ses he saw you ridin' out of Steero a little after midnight. That right?"

As the man spoke a tall, awkward Swede stepped forward. Sam gave him a casual glance.

"I waved to some one in the Last Chance as I went by," he said. "What of it?"

"Some one robbed the safe in Simpson's store, took the post-office money and stamps too," said the deputy. "Simpson tried to stop him and he shot him. Simpson's liable to die. He said the man——"

"Well?" challenged Sam.

"He was wearin' a handkerchief over his face so Simpson couldn't see it, but he had on a fancy silk shirt like the one you're wearin'—an' they ain't many shirts like that in the county. Also his hat fell off when Simpson come up an' tried to grab

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him—an' he had white hair—pompadour. There ain't many folks round here answerin' that description."

Sam folded his arms and looked at his accusers.

"So you-all think I killed him?" he said steadily. "What for? His money? I ain't needin' money."

The deputy shrugged his shoulders.

"You got to admit it looks bad, Shipley," he said. "We don't know yore privut affairs. But the boys is consid'bul riled up about it an' we come out to git you." He spoke with emphasis.

"I guess I'll go along," said Sam. "Simpson hurt bad?"

The entire naturalness of the query, with its exact balance of anxiety, had its effect. The deputy nodded, a friendlier light in his eyes.

"Mebbe you can prove an alibi," he said. "Where was you last night up to the time you left town?"

Sam began to understand the trouble he was in. He could not bring Marion into the affair by telling of their secret rendezvous without smirching her name. And to say that he had ridden aimlessly for over an hour was to provoke derision.

"I guess I can't do that," he answered.

The leader's eyes grew hard.

"All right then," he said. "Come along. An' don't try rousin' them cowhands of yo'rn. 'Twon't do no good."

The little cavalcade rode between the dark hills in silence, Sam in the center of the group. His world was suddenly out of focus. It seemed years since he had plighted troth with Marion and galloped over that same trail with a light heart and a song on his lips. But he kept his courage.

Simpson he had known and liked. It was in the popularity of the wounded man that his own danger lay among the reckless element of the little cowtown. Who the man could be who so externally resembled him, he could not imagine. His chief hope lay in the possibility that Simpson would immediately recognize a difference in figure, perhaps in voice. Jim's absence still puzzled him.

Every window in the town seemed lighted, as if sharing the excitement of the inhabitants. A crowd of men and boys surged about the horsemen, calling out to others who came hastening up from all directions.

"They've got him! They've got Shipley!"

Sam sat still and silent in the midst of the posse as they forced a way through to the door of the store. The leader dismounted and went in, reappearing in less than a minute and remounting.

"Simpson's unconscious," he said in a low voice. "Pretty bad. We got to get our man to the calaboose. Hurry now."

Some one in the crowd caught the information and passed it on. In an instant twenty pairs of hands sought to drag Sam from his saddle, tearing the sleeves out of his shirt as he struggled against them. The posse put their horses to a trot, surrounding him, and so fought their way through the baffled mob.

Steero's lockup was a primitive affair, a one-roomed place of stone with a door on the street and a barred window high up where the building backed against a bluff. Into it they hurried Sam, slamming the heavy spring door upon him.

"Can't do a thing till Simpson can talk," the deputy addressed the crowd. "And doc ses fer you to keep quiet, boys, and give him all the chances. No demonstration now. Time for that later. The man's safe. Pass doc's word along."

As the crowd moved slowly away, quieted by his appeal, the deputy wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Lucky thing I thought of fakin' that message from doc!" he said. "They were beginnin' to get nasty. They ain't had no excitement lately an' it wouldn't take much to stir 'em up to where they'd be tying nooses. I don't believe Shipley did it, spite of evidence. He's got to have his chances, same as Simpson."

Inside the calaboose Sam faintly heard the sound of the retreating crowd and breathed a thankful sigh for the respite. He well understood the reckless anger of a Western mob, once the primitive blood-lust was aroused and directed against a definite object.

He looked about him. If Simpson died? They had left his hands untied, but they were his only inadequate means of defense. There was a crude bench against the wall. He might make a stand with that, rather than be slaughtered like a rabbit.

If only Simpson would last out the night. If he could get word to Jim or some one to rally his friends about him till he could prove his innocence.

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There was no light in the cell save for the little that dimly filtered past the window. Through it came scraping, slipping sounds as if some one were trying to climb up or down the face of the bluff which was only two or three feet from the bars. As he watched, the pale oval of a face appeared in the dark square of the aperture, hardly discernible, and Marion's voice called to him softly, but imperatively:

"Sam! Sam!"

He heard the swift intake of her breath as he answered. Her arm was stretched through the grating.

"Take these," she said. "They are father's."

Sam, standing on the bench, felt the welcome touch of cold steel as two Colt revolvers dropped one at a time into the cup of his hands. His courage mounted with his grip of the guns. He stretched his face toward hers.

"Listen," she went on. "There's no time to waste. Williams, our hired man, telephoned in from Steero that Simpson was dying, that you had been arrested and put in the calaboose and that—" her voice faltered—"if Simpson died they were threatening to lynch—you. Dad woke us up and told us. He said horrible things about you, Sam—" her voice steadied and strengthened—"and he wouldn't let me come in to town. When I insisted he threatened to lock me in. Helen helped me. She went in and talked to Pa and Ma while I went down-stairs on tiptoe, took his guns out of his desk, then got over to the corral and saddled Molly. I came in this end of town. No one saw me. They are all up the street in front of Simpson's, making speeches, so I climbed down the bluff to the window."

"You brave little woman," he said. "I love you!"

"I love you," she murmured.

Then she gasped. He could see the dim whites of her eyes as they widened.

"They're coming!" she said hoarsely.

"You must go away, honey. Good-by!"

"Not good-by, Sam. No!"

"You must go, dear. They mustn't see you. Please."

The increasing murmur of the crowd sounded plainly. With a little moan Marion's face was withdrawn. Sam took up his position opposite the door, out of range from the window, spun the cylinders of his guns and felt the rims of the cartridges beneath his fingers with grim satisfaction. He set the bench midway between him and the entrance.

The hubbub outside centered into a dull sound that held the bestial quality of wild animals howling for their prey. Sam stood tensely ready, his arms slightly crooked, forefingers on the triggers.

The click of a key sounded in the lock, the door was flung back, letting in a flood of cool air. The loud roar of the mob echoed from the walls.

Faces bobbed up and down in the light of lanterns and electric torches, their fierce gesticulations emphasized by the shifting lights and shadows. Sam glimpsed the countenance of the deputy sheriff, blood streaming from his temple, as he reeled sideways through the door he had attempted to defend and fell to the floor.

The man who had wrested the keys from him leaped across the threshold with an exultant cry to those who swarmed behind him. The faces rose out of the darkness like the foaming crest of a wave.

The ray from a torch cut a V through the gloom of the cell and revealed Silver Sam behind the bench, both weapons menacingly aligned on the crowd. His voice came out of the darkness with cold incision that penetrated the wild spirit of the pack and left them chilled, irresolute and, at last, afraid.

"Keep back! Throw up your hands! Touch that bench and I start shooting!"

The surprise of finding an armed and resolute man in place of a cowering, self-convicted felon was melodramatic, almost ludicrous in the fear of those in front of being thrust upon the bench. They struggled against those who tried to force their way in. It is not always the bravest who lead a mob.

"Back! Make way, there. He's got guns! He's going to shoot!"

The mob surged forward and back, then halted. The foremost retreated to the threshold, turned and harangued the mob.

"He's armed, I tell you," shouted one of them.

"To —— with his guns. Burn the place down," came a voice from the crowd.

"It's stone, you fool, it won't burn," answered another.

Sam stood behind the bench, the stunned deputy a-sprawl in front of it. He wondered if Marion had got away clear, and how long he could hold off the crowd. Beyond

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them the sky was beginning to quiver behind the shoulder of the ridge; the smell of dawn was in the air. The huddle of figures began to take shape, the lanterns and torches paled.

Suddenly there was a commotion on the skirts of the crowd. Some one cheered, the sound was caught up, the mob divided, and up the lane of shadowy figures, straight to the door of the calaboose, came three horsemen. Two of them sprang to the ground, pulled the third rider none too gently from his saddle and thrust him through the door.

Then Sody-water Jim and a cowboy from the O. U. grasped the wondering Sam by the hands as the fickle crowd cheered. The reviving deputy took charge of the new prisoner. The mob parted once more and a slight figure, with a face as radiant as the dawn, ran the gantlet of hurrahs straight to the breast of her lover.

"IT WAS this way," said Sody-water Jim, later. "Last night me an' Ed sat in with the rest of the boys at the ranch for a little game of poker. Inside of an hour we had all they owned an' made up our minds we'd drift into Steero for a live game, which we did, an' found one. 'Bout midnight we decided we warn't as well acquainted with the game—or the cards—as the rest of 'em an' we starts to go home.

"The ponies were hitched in the alley back of the Maverick. 'Fore we reaches 'em Ed, here, says he hears a shot, sorter muffled, an' while we was rubberin' an' listenin', down the alley from Simpson's comes a chap ridin' hell-bent for 'lection, layin' into his hawss with a quirt an' goin' some. As he passes us he nearly loses his hat an' grabs it jest in time. He's got a wad of white hair, pompadour, an' he's wearin' a shirt of the same general pattern as what Sam has got left of that one; shirt showin' under his coat a-flappin' at every jump, an' hair plain in the light from the Maverick's back winder.

"It's the boss," says Ed, but I recognized the feller you took such a fancy to one night in Cheyenne—" Sody-water winked at Sam furtively as an assurance that he was not going to disclose state secrets—"an' rememberin' there was a score ag'in him in the matter of the shirt he stole, an' some other triflin' affairs, I gives Ed the office an' we lights out after him.

"He warn't much of a rider, but he sure had gathered some horse somewheres, an' 'bout a mile out of town he gives us the slip. Ed was bound he was mixed up someways with the shot he'd heard, but it looked like good night till I happens to remember the express stops at the Junction 'long 'bout one o'clock to pick up the extry engine for the Pass. It looked like that 'ud be his getaway, an' we takes the chance.

"Sure enough; when we gets to the depot there was my bucko sittin' outside by the operator's window, chewin' his nails an' wishin' the train ud hurry up. Ed takes one side, me t'other, an' we flanks him. 'Evenin,' Whitey Lawton,' I says. 'Thet's a nice shirt yo're wearin'.'

"He likes to drop dead. I was the last person on earth he expected to see—or wanted to. Jest then the whistle toots an' the headlight shows up. 'You ain't takin' this train,' I says, an' sticks my gun between his ribs. Ed he picks up the sack Whitey had with him an' we retires to a quiet spot back of the deepo, ropes the gent, relieves him of his gun an' overhauls the sack. Half of it was full of coin, greenbacks an' money-order stuff wrapped up in a linen-duster so's not to chink, an' sheets of postage-stamps.

"Then I knowed he was wanted back at Steero. We had a hard time roundin' up his hawss what he'd turned loose, an' we had to make slow time comin' back, 'count of the ponies bein' tuckered out, but we arrives on the tick for the gran' fine-alley as they fix it in the movies, with Marion as the hero-ine right in time for the spotlight."

"I haven't thanked you yet," said Marion. "Helen won't mind——"

And she kissed the embarrassed Jim.

"Well, if she don't, I guess Sam can stand it," he said. "But if you really want a chance to thank me, persuade Sam to stop wearin' those hoodoo shirts. The last time I——"

"This one's all torn to pieces," said Sam, "an' I've only got one left of the six. I'll let up on 'em for a while, Jim. Mebbe you're right, but—" he looked down at Marion close snuggled by his arm—"I don't see as I've been damaged personal—to any extent."

"HAVE you seen anything of that white silk shirt of mine, honey?" asked Sam. "We've sure been lucky for six months an' I figgered I'd dare to

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wear it to Jim an' Helen's weddin' if I could find it."

"I took it," said Marion Shipley, looking up from her chair on the veranda of the O. U. ranch-house.

"Warn't you afraid of the hoodoo?"

"There never was any hoodoo, outside of your foolishness in wearing such things. This one was plain white though, and just what I wanted."

"You're welcome to it. What'd you do, make it over into a waist? What are you blushing about, honey?"

She reached for a basket on the table beside her, picked up a tiny garment of thin white silk and held it out for his inspection.

Sam received it gingerly, putting the tips of his forefingers into the little sleeves. His eyes met Marion's, wet with happy pride, and he winked back the sudden moisture in his own lest a drop might splash upon the daintily fashioned vestment. He cleared his throat.

"Why, honey," he said, and halted for appropriate words. Then he smiled. "That 'ud sure break any ol' hoodoo that's stickin' aroun', wouldn't it, mother-girl?"

He raised the little shirt to his lips and kissed it reverently before he gathered his wife into his arms.

When Old Glory Called

by HAPSBURG LIEBE

Author of "The Wise Man," "Into the Hills" etc.

IF THERE is one of the Philippine Islands that is hotter than the rest, that one is Samar; and if there is one place on Samar that is hotter than other places on that particular island, Ciudad de Mañana is that place. Ciudad de Mañana means "City of Tomorrow," and the name fits and yet doesn't fit. It is a crescent-shaped, Spanish and Filipino town; before it lies a murky and shark-infested bay, and behind it rises a semi-circular and steep range of hills that very effectually cuts off seven of every ten breezes that blow.

The rugged crest of this line of hills was much used as a point of vantage by the brown-skinned soldiers of the Moro-Visayan "General" Luk Ban; they were fond of gathering there, with their Remingtons and Mausers and wire-wrapped bamboo cannon, to shoot down at the Americans.

Company L of the —th Infantry, doing garrison, was quartered in an old Spanish Government building that stood not far from the bay shore, and the corrugated-iron roof made of those quarters an oven from a little after sunrise until hours after the coming of darkness. Those men who were not doing routine guard duty lay there on their bunks, clad only in undershirts and trousers, smoked villainous dobie cigarets and mopped perspiration with gaudily colored Chino handkerchiefs, day after day. The monotony of it was well nigh insufferable.

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"When I said my prayers last night," droned the company's comedian, during one of the last of these miserable afternoons, "I prayed for something to happen."

He learned later that it was on that same afternoon that the resourceful Luk Ban took a Gatling and a hundred thousand rounds of cartridges off the little schooner of a Chinese gun-runner.

Silence had barely fallen over the slow laughter that followed the speech of the company's clown, when in walked "Bays Mountain" Charley with his sunburned face streaked with blood and sweat and grime. His faded khaki trousers were rolled to his knees, and his bare feet were scratched and bleeding; his shirt and his undershirt had been torn almost from his body. But nobody showed any great amount of interest in the sight. For this had grown to be but a part of the monotony.

"Same old story," he muttered to "Old Hutch" as he knelt before his locker—his bed was beside that of Private Hutchinson —and began to rummage for fresh clothing.

"Look here, Harman," the old man protested lazily, "don't you know it's too hot to fight?"

"Not when my face is slapped," replied Harman, as briskly as any Yankee could have said it. "It's a matter of principle with me, Hutch."

Harman was a pariah, and it was a shame. There never was a better fellow at heart, I'm sure. His history was a tragedy. He had gone to the Army from Bays Mountain, in Tennessee, the last man alive of a proud old hill clan that had simply fought itself to death; he never meant to go back, for he had no home to go to now. All the pride of all the Harmans was in him, and it was hard for him to bend the military knee; even the saluting of his superiors had been a more or less severe trial for him at the first.

It was his silence and his aloofness that had made him the outcast that he was. His natural reticence was accepted as an I'm-better-than-you-and-you-know-it air, and soldiers do not easily forgive an air like that. Of all the men in his company, Old Hutch alone enjoyed his confidences; he had to have one friend, and he chose Hutchinson, plainly, because Hutchinson was the oldest man in the outfit.

As to his fight on that blistering day, it was but one of a series of fights that he had been having with "Big Buck" McArdsley, ex-pugilist and queer mixture of villainous bully and popular good fellow. This was about his twentieth battle with the giant McArdsley, and he had been defeated in every one of them. That was true courage, to fight on and on without ever winning once. It was really a matter of principle with the slender, fine-looking young man whom they had nicknamed "Bays Mountain" Charley.

Concerning why they fought—there are men who, for no apparent reason whatever, dislike each other on sight and never get quite over it. And then, McArdsley was accustomed to receiving a certain homage from his comrades, and Harman wouldn't give it. Perhaps this was at the bottom of those difficulties.

"What's the mortal use of going on with it, Bays Mountain," Old Hutch protested, "when you know you're going to get yourself all hammered up? Why don't you quit it?"

"Some day," said Harman, with a narrowing of his clear brown eyes, "some day, I'll put it over on Big Buck."

"Hope you do," Hutchinson replied. However, he added under his breath: "But I sure am doubting it."

For Buck McArdsley was born for battle, and nobody ever questioned that quality in him that soldiers call nerve. He was a human bulldog.

When retreat and supper were over, Harman dressed himself as carefully as though he were to undergo inspection by the colonel. He put on fresh clothing from head to foot, and polished his shoes. His friend noticed it, and began to ask questions.

"I'm going to see the Señorita Carlota," Harman whispered.

The old infantryman told himself that he might have known that Harman was going to see the Señorita Carlota de la Concepcion Blanco y Jovellanos. Yes, that was her real name, and—all of it. Who was she? She was a dream. That's it—a dream. Not that she was delicate, or wraithlike, for she wasn't: she was tall and rangy and strong; she was a "regular fellow" and as merry as a fiddler, and she spoke English with a very delightful Castilian accent. She lived with her father and an aunt in a big, tile-covered and roof-gardened house in Ciudad de Mañana's Spanish half, which lay in a grove of palms near the foot of the hills.

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And all the men who made love to her—with the exception of Hutchinson, the whole company did that; even the officers did that—Carlota liked Bays Mountain Charley best. You know how women are, when there's an underdog, don't you? Carlota had long known that Harman was an underdog. And here is another reason for those fights between Harman and the ex-pugilist; for McArdsley was quite desperately enamoured of the Spanish beauty.

JUST at dusk, when Harman was about to walk out of the quarters buildings, Lieutenant Brunslee entered. Now that the captain was sick and aboard the big white hospital ship *Relief*, Brunslee was in command of the company.

"Where are you going, Harman?" the lieutenant asked.

Bays Mountain Charley had the average hill man's dislike of even hinting to strangers concerning the affairs of his heart. He figured, doubtless, that it was none of the lieutenant's business—and maybe it wasn't. So he stood there and stared at Brunslee, and said nothing.

"Where are you going?" sharply repeated the lieutenant.

Brunslee was a very military man, and he was a good man, deep down inside; but he understood little of the wild, liberty-loving spirit of Bays Mountain Charley.

"Out," Harman said respectfully.

"Don't get more than a hundred yards from quarters," ordered the company's commander. "Luk Ban has been quiet for too long now. We may be attacked from any point at any minute."

The private saluted weakly. The officer acknowledged it and walked off.

When the lieutenant had gone, Harman moped over to where Old Hutch sat reading a six-months-old newspaper by the uncertain light of a tallowdip.

"Did you hear that?" he growled.

Without waiting for an answer, he went on angrily:

"It's McArdsley's work. He knows I've been going to see the Señorita Carlota now and then of evenings, and he peached. I'm sure of it. I heard him ask the top sergeant for permission to speak to the lieut. But I'm going anyway, Hutch. I promised her I'd be there. I says to her this—'If I'm alive, Carlota, I'll come.'

"I'm alive, Hutchinson, and I'm going. I hate to disbey orders, but I've already promised. No Harman ever broke his word, Hutch. No Harman that was ever born."

He spoke with a snap. The Army had taken away his native dialect.

"But you took an oath to obey the orders of your superiors," Hutchinson replied.

Bays Mountain was gone, therefore he didn't hear. Had he heard, there is a chance that it wouldn't have stopped him. For to him a promise was as big as an oath.

Don Ramon met Harman at the veranda and shook hands with him. The old don liked the American—he was sick of Luk Ban's despoilation of his outlying rice lands—and he liked Harman especially because his daughter willed it. Carlota was the high light in that household—even to the point of defying her father's prim and elderly sister, Tia Alejandra, by discharging her *Mestiza dueña.*

Then Carlota took her caller in hand and led him to a battered stone settee between two battered stone lions on the palm-dotted and ylangylang-scented lawn, and there they sat down together in the intoxicating light of a bright white moon.

"You were telling me about yourself, when you were here last, when your *trompetero* sounded the call to quarters," murmured that beautiful young woman. "Will you please go on with it? It was interesting."

"I'd finished," Harman remembered. "I've only to say that I'm going to take my discharge here when my term of enlistment is out. I like the Philippines. I like them because it was here that I found you, señorita," very quietly, very earnestly.

"And you are so fond of me as that, Señor Harman?"

"Yes," breathed Bays Mountain. "You don't mind my telling you, Carlota?"

She bent toward him, and his head swam. Her mantilla fell back, revealing her bare and perfect shoulders.

"No, no, I don't mind," she said in that electrical voice of hers. "And I like you too, Charrlee—oh, I like you, too!"

Bays Mountain reached for her, and he got her, and he kissed her—and she kissed him. He had found a corner of God's heaven in the Philippines.

Then into that heaven of his there came a devil in the shape of a sharp and military voice, the voice of the corporal of the guard:

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"Attention, Private Harman! You are under arrest for flat disobedience of orders!"

The girl shrank backward at the rude awakening. Harman sprang to his feet. Before him stood four figures in dim brown khaki, four figures that looked exactly alike to him, four figures that he at once hated with a hatred so intense that it mastered him completely. He forgot many things that he should have remembered. Like a panther he leaped at the group; his quick right arm shot out past three shining bayonets, and one of the four crumpled and fell.

One second more, and the steel-shod butt of a Krag rifle came down hard on the mountaineer's head, and with that everything became black to him.

WHEN his senses returned, he was lying on his banket on the floor of the guardhouse, which was in the lower story of the quarters building, and it was not far from midnight. In the flickering light of a candle that had been stuck to a narrow shelf by means of its own tallow, he recognized the weary face of Daltry, the hospital man.

The corporal of the guard appeared beside Daltry.

"He'll be all right," muttered the man of the red-crossed sleeve. "I'm going to turn in."

"Go ahead," said Corporal Bush.

Daltry left. The non-commissioned officer sank down to one knee beside the pariah.

"Look here, Harman," he frowned, "you've been about the biggest of all the fools I've ever seen."

"It doesn't become you to tell me of it!" quickly.

"We'll let that pass," said Corporal Bush. "I am genuinely sorry for you, Bays Mountain, and I want you to know it. You've been such a splendid soldier, when you wanted to be. In every fight we've had, you've come pretty near to distinguishing yourself—and then you've always gone and spoiled it all by the way you've acted. You could have been a sergeant, if you'd only tried.

"Harman," he continued, "the fact of the matter is that you've nursed yourself until you're soured. You wouldn't let this company like you. Why didn't you forget the tragedy of your life, and begin all over again when you entered the Army? Yes, I know about it—about all your people being dead. Old Hutch told me. That's what makes me so sorry for you."

"Hutch told you!" half angrily.

"Yes, Bays Mountain. But I have kept it a secret; I won't ever breathe it, if you'd rather I wouldn't."

He felt for Harman's hand, found it and pressed it almost as gently as Carlota herself could have pressed it.

"Believe me, I hated to break in up at the don's. I had to do just what I did. I am a soldier and a gentleman, Harman, though I do say it myself——"

Bush stopped abruptly, half choked. Malaria had a deep hold on him, and his nerves were worse than bad; emotion overcame him easily. A warm drop splashed down on Harman's hand. Then Bush rose and went to the doorway, where he stood like a stone image until time for the next guard relief to go on duty.

Bays Mountain Charley lifted his hand and looked for long at the tiny wet spot. He looked at it as long as it was there. It was difficult for him to realize that a member of Company L had let fall a real tear out of sympathy for him. But finally he did realize it. And then he began to think hard; and as he thought, he gradually came to see matters and himself in the true light.

When it was nearly dawn, he called Corporal Bush to him.

"Corp," he said straightforwardly, "you were right; I've sure been a barrel of vinegar. But now I'm going to turn over a new leaf. I'm going to make everybody in the company like me—except Big Buck McArdsley; and after I've licked him, I'm going to try to make even him like me. You see, I've got to lick him first; it's a matter of principle. I'm glad, Corp, that you put me right. Hutchinson has more than once told me almost the same things, but I wouldn't believe him."

Bush dropped to one knee, and Harman sat up. On the bronzed face of the corporal there was the shadow of a regret.

"I'm afraid it's too late now, Bays Mountain," he muttered. "I'm afraid you've ruined everything. You don't know who it was that you knocked down a few hours ago, do you?"

"Was it—you?"

"No. I wish it had been me. It was Lieutenant Brunslee!"

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With that, Bush rose and left the prisoner. Harman went to his feet, absent-mindedly pulled the bandage from his head and threw it down; he turned, white in the face to a small and dark, barred window, and began to stare out with eyes that saw not even the bright stars of the fading Philippine night. The Twenty-First Article of War was running, like a red-hot lance, through and through his mind:

"Any officer or soldier who, on any pretense whatsoever, . . . strikes his superior officer, . . . shall suffer death, or such other punishment as a court martial may direct."

He stood there at the little window until the rising of the sun.

His friend Hutchinson succeeded in getting in to see him, and tried to cheer him, but it was no go. Harman was blue, blue, blue. He was almost sure that he would be shot! "Such other punishment as a court martial may direct," had little meaning for Bays Mountain Charley. He was an extremist.

About noon of that day, the high light of the Jovellanos household appeared at the guardhouse, and behind her was a bare-legged Visayan woman bearing a tray of food covered with snowy napkins. The man on post number one halted them according to regulations; Carlota lifted her head proudly, turned and took the tray from the hands of her servant, and marched boldly past the door-sentry and into the guardhouse! The man at the door went red and called the new corporal of the guard. The corporal went red and called Lieutenant Brunslee.

When Brunslee walked into the guardhouse, Harman and the girl were sitting on a blanket, Japanese fashion, and Harman was trying bravely to eat the very dainty dainties that Carlota had brought for him. Brunslee halted barely inside the door; he was transfixed by the joy he saw on Carlota's face, which was the ages-old joy that good women have in watching the men they love eat the food their own hands have prepared.

The two had not seen the entrance of the lieutenant.

"But it will make a difference, will it not, the fact that you did not know that you were striking *el teniente?*" Carlota was saying hopefully.

"No," said the pessimistic Bays Mountain. "It will make no difference. I can't plead that as an excuse. You see, I didn't care then who it was that I was striking. The Twenty-First Article of War——"

For the second time he quoted it to her, and she saw the matter exactly as he saw it. She bent her head, and he noted that she was pale.

Brunslee smiled broadly; it was almost a grin. Deep down inside Brunslee was a good man. Then he turned on his heel, an almost correct officer's 'bout-face, and walked quietly away.

"Don't interrupt them," he said to the non-com. who was in charge of the guard.

When Carlota looked up, she whispered to Harman this—"you must make an escape, *querido mio.*"

"Yes," Bays Mountain agreed, "I must escape."

"But—how?"

"Yes—how?" Harman's smile was faint. "But leave it to me," he went on. "I'll get out, all right. Leave it to me."

And he did it. During the night that followed, he did it. Two hours before daybreak, when the two guard reliefs that were off duty were sleeping soundly, he rose from his blanket fully dressed, darted like a bolt of lightning past the sentry at the door, cunningly eluded the man on number one post, and was gone into the night! They could have killed him, perhaps; but an American soldier must be goaded far, indeed, before he will fire upon one of his own kind.

FOR days Bays Mountain Charley lived in the bush, eating fruits and now and then taking a meal from some native who was either kindly disposed toward him or afraid of him. So far he had not gone near the house of Don Ramon, because he knew it was likely that that house was being watched for him.

But he had to see Carlota. So he stole, a little after the coming of darkness, up to the spiked stone wall and climbed over by the aid of a small seraya tree. The rooms on the lower floor were lighted, he saw. He crept up to a half-open window and peered through the vines. Not fifteen feet from him sat Carlota and her aunt; Tia Alejandra was sewing, and the girl was making a pretense of reading.

Harman began to whistle softly into his cupped hands the air of "Vaya En Paz, Mi

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Caballero," and it sounded precisely as though it had come from afar. Carlota had sung that song for him a score of times, and she knew it was a favorite of his. He saw her look toward the window, then glance at Tia Alejandra. When she turned her gaze upon the window again he shook the vines slightly. She saw and understood, rose and left the room.

A minute more, and Carlota was standing at his side, there in the shadows of the eaves.

"They are watching the house closely, Charrlee," she whispered. "Come inside with me. I'll find something for you to eat, and then I'll hide you here, *mi amado*."

"If you harbor me, you'll have trouble over it," whispered Harman. "But I'll go inside long enough to get something to eat. I'm sure tired of green bananas and guavas and the other stuff Iguanas live on."

She led him into the dining-room, and placed cold food before him, and then she dropped into a chair across the table from him and began to watch him with the ages-old joy in her eyes. Bays Mountain Charley did not have to force food down him now.

When he had given a sign that he had had enough, she rose and hurried away and returned a moment later with a good American-made sporting rifle and an unbroken box of fifty cartridges. These she pressed into his hands.

"Defend yourself," she told him.

Bays Mountain seemed about to put them down.

"I never could fight the company, Carlota," he said.

"No," smiled the girl. "You could never do that. But there are Luk Ban's men, you know."

"Of course," agreed Harman, dropping the box of cartridges into one of the pockets of his khaki blouse. "I——"

He broke off because he had heard the voice of an American at the front door. Carlota too heard it; she blew out the lamp, stepped to Harman and put a hand on his arm.

"This way!" she whispered nervously. "Quickly! They must have seen you come in, and they will search the house——"

He followed her to a door that opened upon a little flower and vegetable garden, beyond which the spiked stone wall rose gray and forbidding in the moonlight.

"There is the back gate," she said, pointing. "It is not fastened. I left it unlocked for you. *Adios*, Charrlee! And when you can safely come back to see me, come. *Adios, carissimo!*"

He told her good-by, and crept into the little garden on his hands and knees, dragging the rifle after him.

But they saw him before he reached the iron gate. The moon was full, and there was no cloud to hide it. A bluff voice, the voice of Big Buck McArdsley, rang out like the crack of a pistol—

"Halt!"

"Not for you!" clipped Harman.

He rose and sprang for the gate. A bullet cut plaster from the wall, two feet above his head; McArdsley, no doubt, fired high on purpose. And before he could load the chamber from the magazine and fire again, Harman was through the gate and swallowed up in a thicket of guava.

The fugitive went directly up the hill, and he did not pause for long until he had reached the crest. There he sat down and listened. He was not being pursued, evidently, and he breathed freely.

For an hour he sat there and watched the lights of Ciudad de Mañana, City of Tomorrow, go out one by one. When the company's trumpets blew the call to quarters, he went to his feet from sheer force of habit. When taps sounded, he thought of the times when he had heard it blown over the still, white bodies of those of his comrades who had fallen. They had not fallen so far as he, the deserter. Were it not for Carlota, who would love him as long as life was within her, and perhaps even longer. . .

Bays Mountain Charley looked to his rifle. Then he stretched himself out on the crest of the hill, under a few scrubby bushes, went to sleep and dreamed of Tia Alejandra and his Carlota.

When he awoke, the dawn was flaring upward from the rim of the eastern sea in an ever widening, rose-colored fan. He sat up, combed his thick black hair with his fingers, and put on his rumpled campaign hat. Next he looked again to the rifle that Carlota had given him, and made doubly sure that it was in proper working order and fully loaded. By the sights on it, he noted that it was good for a thousand yards; its range was a little more than half that of his own Krag, and he hoped that the sights were true to the barrel.

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This done, he lay back and thought hard for an hour and a half. Then he sat up again.

From his position there on the crest, he commanded a view of miles in every direction. His were the keen eyes of the mountaineer, and accustomed to distances, therefore he had little difficulty in detecting that which ordinary eyes would not have seen—which was two dirty-white serpents of men creeping along the bayshore, one from the east and the other from the west, in the extreme outskirts of Ciudad de Mañana.

Harman understood immediately. Luk Ban and some six hundred of his brown-skinned soldiers were about to make their long delayed attack upon Company L!

THERE wasn't time for warning the company. Two minutes from the two seconds in which Bays Mountain sighted them, Luk Ban and his soldiers had reached their objective point, a little above the ends of the town's crescent, and were shooting at the quarters building.

Their first fire was the signal for a rumbling staccato of shots from a point nearly two hundred yards out the crest of the hill from Harman. Bays Mountain went to his feet and peered cautiously over the bushes. He saw that new Gatling of Luk Ban's with a solid stream of lead and fire pouring from its muzzles toward the quarters building in the town below!

Company L was trapped very neatly. It was being attacked determinedly from three sides, and by numbers of six to one—besides the machine gun. There was no avenue of escape, not even by way of the bay, for it was bare of vessels larger than small canoe-like, out-rigged *barotes*. And there was no means of bringing reinforcements unless he, Harman, went for them.

But it was miles across swampy jungles to Balogas and reinforcements. Harman figured that he could not possibly get back with Companies M and K in time to save Company L from massacre at the hands of Luk Ban and his bloodthirsty horde, and his calculation was a wise one. So Bays Mountain Charley decided upon another plan, which, if it succeeded, would mean quick safety for his comrades.

If it failed—well, if it failed, it would surely mean his death, and the chances were largely against him. Now Harman did not want to die. In spite of his tragic life and his difficulties with his company, the future suddenly seemed as bright as new gold to him—because of Carlota.

Down in the City of Tomorrow he saw Old Glory waving from its staff, stretched out and fluttering before him in one of the rare breezes that blew there. He heard Old Glory calling to his heart and to his blood and to his manhood, and then death seemed a smaller thing. For what is death to such an American, when Old Glory calls? It was a matter of principle.

Bays Mountain Charley, the regiment's finest marksman, whose father had taught him that it were a disgrace to shoot a squirrel except it be in the head and close to the eye, went down to his hands and knees. Hurriedly he crept forward for a few yards; then he stopped behind a clump of scrub, and counted the men who were in charge of the death-dealing Gatling. There were six of them, he saw, and four of them were armed with rifles.

Harman pushed the barrel of his weapon through the clump of scrub, flattened himself on the ground and took careful aim at one of the two men who were operating the rapid-firer, muttered under his breath—

"Lord, how I hope this is smokeless powder!"

And pulled the trigger.

One of the six men dropped promptly. What is a puny two hundred yards to a Tennessee Harman? He pumped another cartridge into the chamber, took another careful aim and fired again—and another of the Visayans dropped dead in his tracks.

"Good boy!" Bays Mountain figuratively patted himself on the back. "Good boy! Now get that fellow in the bread-tray hat!"

Again he took aim, and again he fired, and the man in the bread-tray hat promptly crumpled and fell and lay still.

The remaining three Visayans stood gripping their Mausers like statues, rooted to the stones in superstitious fear. The din had kept them from hearing the report of Harman's rifle, and his powder was without smoke. It was unbelievable that bullets from the town below could pass through the shield of steel and kill men behind it; and yet. . . .

Harman took another aim, and was about to fire, when the three Filipinos turned and ran down the hillside and toward the jungles of the interior. As they went, Bays Mountain shot at them; but it is very difficult to hit a moving target at two hundred yards,

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even for a Tennessee Harman, and the three Visayans ran on.

As Bays Mountain Charley hurried for the silent Gatling, he heard the sounds of hard battle below him, and it spurred him onward. When he reached the rapid-firing gun, he saw that there were plenty of cartridges for it; he saw, too, that Luk Ban's forces were in plain view for him. He had just dragged the dead *insurrectos* to one side and trained the weapon upon its owners, when a bullet struck the steel shield from behind. One of the Visayans who had deserted had shot at him!

But he paid little attention to that. He worked like a man with four arms and four hands in getting the Gatling under way, and the hail of lead that he sent into Luk Ban's horde was galling and demoralizing. He turned the hot barrels first on one attacking force and then upon the other, and his aim was true and deadly.

Even when a Mauser's steel-jacket passed through his shoulder from behind, he did not cease his galling fire. Another Mauser's bullet passed through the fleshy part of his left upper arm and brought blood in a stream, and still he did not stop. A few minutes more, however, and bullets were coming with startling rapidity from the rifles of the deserters. Harman saw that if he were to operate the captured Gatling much longer, he would have to silence the Mausers.

So he snatched up his rifle and ran toward the Visayans, who, emboldened by his nonresistance, were now in full view to better their aim. One of them he dropped, and the remaining two threw aside their weapons and ran like rolling stones for the jungle. Harman fired at them, and missed. There was a blur before his eyes now. Loss of much blood through his two wounds had taken a great toll of his strength.

But he set his teeth and staggered back to his Gatling. With hands that shook, he began again to pour a deadly stream of lead into the thinned-down ranks of the enemy. As long as he could force his muscles to move, he kept it up—he, the pariah, as a matter of principle.

"I'm sticking with you, old Gat!" he would cry half deliriously. "And you stick with me!"

Cr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-rack! the Gatling would rumble back to him. *Cr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-rack! Cr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-rack!*

Just when he felt that he must succumb to weakness, a wild American yell from the town under his dimmed eyes told him that the victory was won. He had saved the company! With the last of his strength he straightened and waved his hat; then he doubled up like a rag at the breech of the gun and lay there motionless. And Lieutenant Brunslee, holding his field glasses in bloodstained fingers, saw it.

Somebody was tilting a flask to Harman's lips when he came to, and he was in bandages. He opened his eyes to see that he was in bed in the big house of old Don Ramon. Over him stood Daltry, the hospital man, and the two lieutenants. Beside him knelt his Carlota, who was sobbing and kissing his hand.

SIX weeks later, Harman was entirely well. It was then that Big Buck McArdsley invited the former pariah "across the line" for their last fight. Harman went, and the human bulldog adroitly permitted himself to be whipped! And the company saw to it that Harman never knew any better.

Brunslee never entertained any serious intentions of preferring charges against Bays Mountain Charley. Harman was discharged as a sergeant a year afterward; he promptly married his Carlota de la Concepcion Blanco y Jovellanos, and now he is quite the best loved man on the island of Samar.

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Pikers Afloat

A Complete Novelette

by WALT McDOUGALL

I

SELLING typewriters in Atlantic City in May, before the annual inflow of easy money mellows and softens the hearts of hotel men, storekepers and householders yearning to rent fifteen-hundred dollar cottages for three thousand for the season, is not calculated to bring out the romance in a drummer's soul—if he has any. Nobody ever accused Norman Kellogg, also at that time a drummer, of possessing either soul or romance, but his long, sour face evidenced the same weariness and distaste for an ungrateful vocation as was nauseating me.

Out on an indistinct horizon of opal, four misty menhaden boats made violet blurs and in the weird theatrical light of that Spring evening, persons moving on the boardwalk loomed up magnified and the ozone was of the delicate flavor of clam chowder cooking. Sitting there with Norman Kellogg, swapping confidences on the porch of an expensive hotel seemed quite as unreal. I had known him but a few days yet we had arrived at that degree of familiarity that permits two friends to sit in silence for long periods. Nicotine usually assists materially toward this happy consummation.

When my cigar had burned down to unmanageable proportions, the silence suddenly became oppressive and tinged with the slight chill now settling upon land and sea. I tossed the stump over the railing and asked, with ungrammatical facetiousness:

"Of what are you thinking of?"

"I was pondering upon the problem of the annual budget, trying to dope out how I was going to raise some cash this Spring and wishing that you had a wad, so that you could stand a touch," he replied.

I laughed, safe in the citadel of impecuniosity.

"If I had it, I'd probably be easy meat," I answered, lightly.

"Perhaps. I think you would. From pondering upon that idle subject, as fruitless and as frosty as a polar expedition," he continued, "I fell to thinking of the stranded steamer that we had here on the beach last Summer——"

"An even less profitable topic," I interrupted.

"And suddenly an idea was born! I've been following it up and now a scheme is hatched, like the pelican—no, it was the sphynx—full blown and perfect from the ashes of misfortune——"

"You mean the phenix, I suppose. That's the only thing I remember that came out of the ashes; but can the classic stuff and let's hear the dope," I advised.

"Got any money?" he demanded, abruptly. "Can you raise a thousand—or even five hundred?"

"I might dig up five, at a pinch," I

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responded, cautiously. "What's the big idea?"

He reflected for a moment, then said:

"I'll tell you but if it doesn't appeal to you, Wharton, don't open your face about it to anybody. This place is full of pikers laying for money-making schemes and they'd cop the idea in a minute. My plan is to have another wreck—a regular, hand-picked, permanent, stranded derelict right smack on the beach and to rig up some sort of a jigger of the type of the breeches-buoy, you understand, to carry people out to her at so much per trip. We'll have refreshments on board, a brass band, dancing and a cabaret show, you know. Believe me, it will be the hottest kind of a novelty and they'll eat it up!"

His enthusiasm was kindling me but I was still cautious.

"You couldn't get people to do it. I mean, not enough to even pay your help, not in breeches-buoys," I demurred.

He snorted contemptuously.

"Man, you don't know the kind of goofs that infest this dump in Summer, three or four hundred thousand of them, and every mother's son and every mother's daughter of 'em just crazy to try something new just once. Maybe you don't know, either, that all the old amusements have fallen down, the Old Mill and the Roller Coaster and the Dippy Sozzle and the rest, all played out and faded away and a new one, like this, will just have to beat them away with clubs! Why, even at a hundred an hour at ten cents per—"

"But the breeches-buoy will only hold one person—" I began protestingly.

"We'll build regular breeches-buoy cars to hold ten people and run 'em out on one line and back on another. Beats the merry-go-round or the chutes four ways! They can wear bathing-suits and get a dip, too."

"Where would you get your wreck?" I demanded, beginning to take the thing seriously in spite of myself. There is a certain strain of wild daring in my blood, inherited, my mother has always insisted, from Bohemian ancestors and it was tingling in my veins now.

"That's what started me on the track!" he chuckled. "That wreck that came ashore here would have been sold at auction if she remained aground but she floated off one night. But there are others, lots of them, old hulks that can be picked up for a song, that will float long enough for our purpose. We'll buy one, load her with rocks, sail her 'round here and jam her ashore, bang up as near shore as possible. Then, after the excitement is over, we'll bob up with the only surf trolley line on earth and the Marine Band or the Mermaid Gaiety Company or some such trifle and begin to count the dimes!"

I meditated. Finally I asked:

"Do you believe they'd fall for it?" I believed they would. I knew that I would sample such an entertainment had I the chance.

"Fall for it! They'd trample over each other to get to it! I'm flat broke or I'd hop to it tomorrow. As it is, I'm going to hustle 'round and dope out what it will cost and then I'll try to raise some coin."

"Well, it's not half a bad scheme," I commented rather coldly and then rose to go and dress for dinner.

When I came down Kellogg had vanished. I learned later that he had spent the remaining hours of twilight in an examination of the beach and in making inquiries among the life-savers and the fishermen regarding the outlying sand-bars and tidal currents that have caused the destruction of hundreds of vessels along this treacherous coast. As for myself, I lay awake far into the night considering the merits of his novel enterprise and by breakfast time had resolved to embark my little all in it.

But Norman Kellogg seemed a shade less enthusiastic when encountered in broad daylight. He smiled cannily when I casually expressed my appreciation of his unique plan.

"I've figured it all out," he said. "It's all right except in one particular and that's the way with all these good things. Buying the ship is easy and the wrecking is easier, but the sailing business knocks it higher than the Woolworth Building. We've gotter get somebody to navigate the old ark. See?"

"What d'ya mean, navigate her?" I snorted. "I'll sail her myself."

"Can you sail a ship?" he asked, astonished.

"I was Vice-Commodore of the Rockaway River Yacht Club for eight years," I responded, throwing out my chest.

"Rockaway River! Where in Hokus is that?"

"It's a branch of the Passaic," I admitted, somewhat less proudly.

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He fell back in his chair and roared; then he apologized.

"You may not know," I added, "that it is axiomatic that a man who can sail a catboat can handle a frigate, but such is the fact."

"It may be axiomatic but it's —— idiotic!" he retorted. "No, there's the rub! We'll have to get some old sea-captain who knows the coast, who can shoot the sun, calculate by dead reckoning and sail by the stars and who knows the sand-bars and things or she'll go ashore on some desert spot like Barnegat where there isn't a red cent in a year!"

"All right, then. We'll hire your old salt. When do you want to start in?" I asked.

"Why—say, can you finance the scheme?" he queried, somewhat tremulously.

"If it won't cost over eight hundred, I'll go you," I responded. "I'm good for that much."

He grasped my hand and cried:

"We're made men! I'll get busy at once and find the ship. Then we can weigh anchor at any time before June."

"Well, I'll get another two weeks off in June and if it is nice weather I'll take the trip with you," I said. "But it must be in June——"

"It needn't take three days!" Norman declared with emphasis. "After we get the craft we can sail here from any reasonable distance, in, say, twenty-four hours, unless we founder or go ashore. This is the twelfth of April—by June we ought to be more than prepared. I'll go up to Philadelphia this afternoon at three."

I LEFT Atlantic City two days later and although I had frequent letters from Kellogg I did not see him until the middle of May. Then he suddenly burst into my office wearing a yachting cap and a glad smile and announced that the desired vessel was found at last—a schooner of large tonnage. She was to be purchased for the trifling sum of one hundred and sixty-two dollars. He had examined her himself most particularly and was convinced that she would hold together until comfortably beached and probably for a long time afterward. Her owner had declared that she was still seaworthy, but he had built a larger craft and had consequently rather neglected the *Samuel H. Adams*—the vessel in question—a fact which alone prevented a sale at a higher price.

A few days later we were in Tuckahoe, a tiny river village apparently forgotten by the world, and looking over the *Samuel H. Adams* with rather mixed emotions. I confess that at the first sight of the ancient hooker my cheery hopes were a bit dampened, for her weather-stained decks, rust-eaten ironwork, frayed rigging, wide-open seams and worn, patched sails seemed to indicate speedy dissolution, but her owner conducted us below decks and striking each massive beam and rib with a large hammer, exclaimed with enthusiasm:

"Look at her stem! Ribs and keelson as good as new! Bulkheads like rocks! Beam-ends fresh as flowers! All she needs, boys, is a bit of calkin' and a little paint!" Etc., etc., until I was completely assured that, like some scarred old veteran, she was still hearty and sound, although somewhat dingy and ragged. Norman, however, succeeded in getting the purchase price reduced twelve dollars and a quarter because he discovered that one of the pumps would not "suck."

"Used to sell pumps!" he explained to me behind the cook's galley. "They can't fool me on that proposition although I don't know a garboard streak from a garbage-can."

We had told the owner, Mr. Simon Rambo, that we wanted the schooner for a cruise along shore. When we further informed him that we desired to engage a competent skipper he seemed confused and professed to know of none who was not at present busily working at his trade. In vain we urged him to rack his brain for the address of some old sea-dog who could take charge of the work of fitting out the craft for the voyage. His memory completely failed him and much depressed but still resolved to find a navigator, we left him. Later, with the wisdom gained by experience, I realized that an able seaman was the very last person Rambo would have wished to inspect the rotten old hulk.

A few strides from Rambo's home stood the Washington House, an antique hostelry with a swinging, creaking sign, among giant primeval pines and elms around the roots of which some dozens of plump pullets scratched industriously. With visions of tender fried chicken for dinner we turned into the entrance and as we trod the

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shell-paved walk toward the wide Colonial doorway I mentally compiled a menu for a "shore dinner" consisting of Tuckahoe Bay oysters, clam chowder, fried pullet, asparagus and new potatoes, with a well-founded hope that this old hotel might also furnish a surprise in the shape of a bottle of some ancient New Jersey Burgundy, laid down perhaps a quarter of a century since.

The host, a fat man of middle age, met us, quite by accident, at the door with a grunt of welcome and ushered us immediately into a fly-invested dining-room where we feasted upon stringy corned-beef and cabbage, washed down with water strongly tinctured with iron-rust. Two others, apparently farm hands, ate at the same table at the head of which, ere we had finished, the hotelkeeper took his seat. A halting conversation followed and after questioning him about the crops, the local movie house and village politics, Kellogg broached the subject nearest to our hearts.

"Nope. I dunno of any sea-cap'ens round here lessen they're in hidin' or disguised as garage-keepers," he said, frowningly. "Th' place useter be fuller of 'em than a bed is with bugs oncet, but not nowadays."

He paused to remove traces of cabbage from his vest with a toothpick and then added, slowly:

"Ye might git old Bill Stunsell, ginerally known hereabouts as 'Telescope Bill.' They do say he useter be a sea-cap'en but it was afore my time ef he was. He can tell more yarns 'bout wrecks and fires at sea and slave ships 'n' sich than any livin' man. He might be your oyster. I dunno."

"Where can he be found?" I asked.

He turned to the open door of the kitchen and roared—

"Hey, Si! Seen Telescope Bill round anywhere?"

A husky voice responded:

"Yep. Seen him a-settin' on the piazzer of the Foamcrest Inn. He's been layin' mattin' there sence yestidy."

"That's down the road 'bout two minutes' walk," said the hotelkeeper, indicating the direction with a fork. "But he's more'n likely to wander up here now it's gittin' dark, specially ef he's been paid fer layin' that mattin'."

"Does he drink?" I queried. "That is, I mean, to excess?"

He looked at me curiously, gulped some food hastily and replied—

"Nope—nothin' to speak of—not now——"

Just then the voice from the kitchen drowned his words.

"Here's Bill now, Peter!" it boomed. "D'ya wanter see him?"

Mine host arose, waddled slowly to the door and a few minutes later returned ushering in a typical sea-dog, one of the sort artists paint tugging at a huge oar amid crested waves or at the wheel of a bark with ragged cliffs in the background, with a ruddy face seamed and weather-beaten, completely encircled by a fringe of faded hair like a halo of tanned excelsior. He had but one eye, but that was bright blue and it possessed a keen, searching speculation like that seen in the glance of a depot hackman or a great general or the lookout in a faro bank. It embraced us both in one swift sweep and then seemed to dull and glaze over so that its expression altered almost to stupidity.

"This here is Cap'en Stunsell," said the hotel man. "Bill, these two gents wanter have a talk with ya."

Stunsell rolled forward, tossed his old yachting-cap into the deep window-seat and dropped into a chair while our host withdrew into the kitchen with a peculiar look upon his face. He seemed, I thought, to suspect us of designs upon the innocent old mariner. Kellogg kicked me under the table and spoke:

"First thing before this meeting is the question of irrigation," he said cheerily. "Captain, nominate your poison."

Telescope Bill's stern, wrinkled face brightened.

"I'll take a leetle red-eye, I guess," he responded. "It's good fer the malary that's all round these parts this Spring."

The "malary" medicine had scarcely been placed upon the table when he exclaimed with sudden heartiness—

"Avast there! Good licker such as this calls fer a sailor's toast, my bucko boys!"

He cleared his throat and half chanted:

> Here's to the good old *Polly*
> That sailed the seas so jolly!
> Here's to the bloody codger
> That h'ists the Jolly Roger!
> The Jolly Roger and the Jolly *Polly*
> From Botany Bay to Trichinopoli—
> We'll sail the tub to Hell, by golly!

Then, his eye gleaming like a blue star,

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he tossed the fiery Jersey lightning down his throat.

"I'll bet a hat that you've been a pirate in your time!" cried Norman with effusion. "That's a regular buccaneer's toast, all right!"

Captain Stunsell's eye still glittered as he replied:

"Nope. They ain't been no pirates in my time but I useter bunk with an old guy that, like as not, had seen bloody old doin's. Me an' him was wrecked together and spent three years on a desert island. He was eaten by the savidges, afterward."

"That's what we asked you in for!" exclaimed Kellogg, eagerly, as he pressed my foot to enjoin silence.

I fell in with his evident desire to induce the old salt to talk of his lurid past and after another drink the captain's tongue wagged freely enough. He knew that he had as auditors a pair of credulous landlubbers and he spread himself to entertain us.

Most amazing tales of hairbreadth escapes and thrilling adventures, interlarded with references to smuggling, the slave-trade, scuttling of vessels and hidden treasure, poured from him for two hours in an uninterrupted stream, and we became thoroughly convinced that we had fallen upon a genuine Clark Russell sea-freak. After all Tuckahoe had long been in bed Norman disclosed his purpose, and after explaining at great length, it seemed to me, that we intended to take a short Summer cruise along shore, he asked the captain what he would take to navigate our vessel. Stunsell's jaw fell. He shifted his feet uneasily and then stammered—

"Gee whiz! Why, I ain't been ter sea in fourteen year!"

"What difference does that make?" demanded Kellogg. "This sort of cruise would be mere child's play for you!"

The ancient mariner tried to put us off with various flimsy excuses, such as his age and weakness, but we would not be denied and finally he reluctantly consented. I marveled that Norman had not revealed our true object but once in our room in the hotel he explained the meaning of the subterfuge.

"That old tar would never consent to wreck his ship!" he declared. "No sir! Think what a jolt it would give his reputation and besides, don't you know he'd lose his master's certificate, you boob? We will have to do that part of it ourselves or, maybe, we'll let him into it gradually when we are on the high seas or the offing, as it were. Get me?"

This certainly seemed reasonable, surely. I knew enough of maritime matters to realize that no reputable master or mate would endanger his future by being a party to any undertaking such as we meditated, so I acquiesced in deceiving the old salt. Besides, I was quite confident that the whole proceeding would be devoid of danger or even excitement, for the Summer, with its calms and gentle zephyrs was almost upon us.

THE next day Captain Stunsell seemed to have completely cast off all his aversion to resuming a sea life and now appeared extremely enthusiastic, but he insisted upon our maintaining a strict silence regarding his engagement by us. He declared that he would sheer off if we told a soul that we had employed him, hinting that the doctor had prohibited his venturing afloat.

His declaration hindered our intention to ascertain something of the captain's habits and qualifications, inasmuch as it prevented us from making any but the most casual and general inquiries about him. We learned, readily enough, that he had long been a public character in Tuckahoe, earning a precarious living in Winter by tending furnaces, beating carpets and doing odd jobs and in Summer as a pleasure-boatman, and had gained his cognomen of "Telescope Bill" by constantly appearing with an immense brass telescope under his arm, while he was famous for miles around for his tales of the sea. In fact, rather a bad odor attached itself to the aged sea-dog among the old-fashioned seaside folk whose one and only vice was a simple, barefaced holdup and robbery of the hot-weather visitor. During the rest of the year they were as upright and consistent a lot of pious Christians as ever slept through a sermon.

Pursuant to the veteran's advice we maintained, also, complete secrecy regarding our cruise and as we were ignorant of such matters we entrusted to him the task of provisioning the schooner. We gave him a few directions regarding our own needs and told him to use his own judgment

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thereafter. For several days I sat on the porch of the Foamcrest Inn smoking the pipe of anticipation while Norman busied himself in securing a cargo of stones of all sizes as ballast. The venture, I must state, meant far more to me than to Kellogg, for I had more at stake, not only financially but, as I might say, spiritually.

There was a girl, a dear girl, near to my heart but far, oh, very far from attainment, for her father, a cold and calculating automobile-maker, had insisted on a financial backing to my suit that, under present conditions, was simply a fade-out to hope.

Alice Carbur, although a child of wealth, had not always been such. Indeed, ten years before, Isaac Carbur had been only a bicycle repairer but now the girl dwelt in a palace where every whim was fulfilled as soon as expressed, and her tastes were as expensive as they were varied—yet she was perfectly willing to share my humble salary and live in a tiny cottage. I could not ask her to give up her pleasures and prospects while scarcely accustomed to them as yet, hence my castles in Spain were far more alluring than were those of my fellow adventurer.

As Norman and I conferred together we occasionally saw the captain flit by wearing a new yachting cap and an air of deep abstraction. Now and then in our walks he would accost us with a deep "Belay there!" and impart to us in a husky whisper that all was going well, but revealing only the most meager details as to his proceedings. Tuckahoe is not half a bad place and I suppose it is delightful in Summer. In early Spring it is simply heavenly in its balmy, scented breezes and the quality of its clams and oysters. The hours passed in sensuous idleness for there was nothing to do but smoke.

We sat looking dreamily out over the bay toward the white sand-spits beyond the meadow where a flock of kittiwake gulls were circling, with plaintive yet piercing cries. Almost at our feet the narrow creek joined the river, its banks a vivid chrome green with new flags. The margin of the river was a smear of rich burnt-amber mud, alive with fiddler crabs and alongside the water's edge a hundred "tilt-up snipe" were running hither and thither eagerly, weighing every morsel of food before swallowing it, while myriads of tiny fish rippled the whole surface of the bright water. The dingy sails of oyster-boats hung in a liquid shimmer of warm air that dimmed and distorted their hulls aloft in a sort of mirage above the far horizon where the bay melted into the ocean. A sensuous Spring languor had settled on land and sea and the glow of cherry blossoms against the dark green of the gnarled cedars seemed to pulsate in unison with the lip-lip of the wavelets.

At this moment Stunsell elected to appear. He told us that all was prepared and, incidentally and casually, he presented the bill for supplies. Norman glanced at it and whistled; then he read it aloud, as follows:

4 dozen bottles rye whisky
6 cases Hockheim beer
1 ton ice
3 barrels pilot bread
6 bottles cocktails, assorted
1 barrel oysters
1 bag flour
1 gallon Jamaica rum
25 pounds coffee
2 dozen cans condensed milk
6 hams
6 sides bacon
2 gallons molasses
2 bottles vermouth
6 dozen cans soup
6 cans vegetables
3 bottles Scotch whisky

"There are a few other items," he gasped, "and it all comes to one hundred and thirty-seven dollars?"

I was, of course, stricken dumb, and before I recovered speech Kellogg's expression conveyed a hint of caution. He added quickly:

"Of course, for a long cruise such as ours, a good supply of provisions is needed. Captain Stunsell has a due perception of our requirements."

"Well, I reckon I know what a couple o' sports want on a cruise, hey?" chuckled the captain, closing his eye. "Ef the licker gives out we kin easy put in ashore fer more, and say, I had some trouble with a dern landlubber that was set on loadin' aboard a lot o' rocks. Said you'd ordered 'em, but I fit him off as well as I could. He kep' a-comin' all day but he had ter dump 'em on the wharf——"

"That's all right! I forgot to tell you about the stones," Kellogg interrupted. "My friend here is afraid to go to sea without plenty of ballast."

"Well, the feller's down there now cussin'

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like a goshdinged cranberry-picker and no mistake," answered Stunsell.

"I'll go and see him," exclaimed Norman, leaping up. "You settle the bill, Wharton," he added with a nod that was pregnant with significance.

Realizing that we would reveal all the depth of our deception to the ancient mariner if we refused to properly provision our vessel, I handed over the money without even looking to see if the amount was added up correctly.

II

WHEN Kellogg returned to report that he had set the men to work loading the *Samuel H. Adams* with assorted stones, I had somewhat recovered from the shock. I am of a saving disposition and unashamed of it, for I had saved with a purpose. Saving money for the mere sake of the money is, doubtless, a vice and a debasing practise; but for a specific object, a laudable object, it is an uplifting and an ennobling pursuit with nothing sordid about it. Without the hope of gaining Alice Carbut I could never have laid up eight dollars in eight years but I had already acquired the money-saver's reluctance to parting with it, especially for a useless purpose and it left a sore sensation.

Still, I could dimly see some humor in the situation but it was far from being as comical to me as it was to my partner—who had been at no expense whatever. He laughed heartily at my protests.

"Never mind, old peg. We can dispose of the booze and the other stuff somewhere without much loss. The main thing is to keep the old duffer from suspecting our real purpose. We're to sail in the morning. The ship will be loaded tonight by the light of the moon. Unless the unexpected occurs we'll be at sea by noon tomorrow."

I was still slightly peeved and remained silent. With somewhat less optimism he added:

"That is what I'm afraid of. Perhaps there is some unknown detail, some devilish harbor license, sailing privilege or other legal shipping bunk to be sprung on us. It is these little trifles of which nobody thinks that often mar the most perfect schemes. I remember that a mere piffling comma, misplaced by a typewriter, caused the calling of an extra session of the New Jersey legislature a while ago, to enact a law over again——"

"Forty-eight bottles of whisky!" I groaned. "And I've promised not to take a drink until I'm married!"

"Fifty-one. You forget the Scotch. Anyhow, you ought to feel complimented. His notion of our capacity shows that he has been accustomed to sailing with politicians. But let's walk down and see how the loading is progressing. It's some considerable night!"

We walked down the shaded silent road in the moonlight, the young frogs shrilling loudly in the deep gutters, the air scented with minglings of pine sawdust, newly turned earth, meadow mud and night flowers while overhead invisible, spectral snipe or plover whistled wildly down the still air as they flew from pool to pool; a night filled with sweetness and our last on land for many days. On the grass-grown wharf several men were lazily loading stones into wheelbarrows but with an air of secrecy for they stopped on our approach. Then we saw the proprietor of the Washington House sitting on a barrel. He grinned and remarked:

"I hear as how you've been and bought the old *Sam'l H. Adams*. She looks like ya took her fer an old debt, eh? I kin recolleck her along 'bout the time o' the Centennial an' she was some old even then!"

"Gol dum my deadeyes! I'm glad you come!" roared Captain Stunsell, suddenly appearing at the rail of the old craft. Then, turning to the laborers, he growled—"Avast heavin'!

"I reckon we've loaded into her about forty tons o' stun and that orter be enough, hey?" he said to us.

"Ef ya want the bottom to stay inter the old tub, it is!" suggested the hotel man.

Although several wagonloads of stone remained on the wharf Kellogg decided that sufficient had been put aboard whereupon the captain dismissed the men with true sailorly shortness and impoliteness.

"Ye might sleep aboard ef ye wanter," he suggested. "Everything's aboard and ye could kinder git useter it. We'll start early and git the tide."

After a whispered conference we concluded that, as our expected voyage would, in all probability, be limited to one day's sail or thereabout, the experience would be rather interesting and two of the men were

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dispatched to the hotel for our effects while we boarded our craft.

I slept lightly, awaking at frequent intervals to hear the sad call of sea-birds and the purling of water under the stern but Norman snored all night like a saw-mill. Finally I slept soundly and awoke with an odd sensation. Looking out I saw the sedgy shore gliding past at some distance. Dressing quickly I hastened on deck to find Stunsell at the wheel with Kellogg beside him and Tuckahoe a long distance astern. Norman greeted me with nautical hitch of his trousers.

"The *Samuel H. Adams* once more plows the sea!" he announced.

"Yep and she's a clipper, blarst my tops'ls!" added the old salt. "Tide's agin us but she's just a-walkin' out. I hitched my old rowboat astern, did ye notice?"

We saw the captain's clumsy bateau bobbing astern like an apple. Before I could speak, our headway was checked as the schooner slid softly upon a muddy shoal.

"Garn ding it! She's aground!" shouted Stunsell, violently spinning the big wheel to starboard. Then he ran excitedly forward and peered over the bow. The vessel swung slowly around.

"That's a brand-new sandbank!" complained the captain, peevishly. "Must hev formed there this Winter. Anyhow, th' tide'll take us off in an hour, so I'll perceed to git breakfast."

We had almost finished the meal when the schooner slipped off as easily as she had gone on the bank and we pursued our course. Seated on campstools near the wheel we smoked and listened to the aged mariner's comments on nature, the wind, tide and weather, and the National and State Geodetic Survey's misplaced buoys and misleading charts. It was quite evident that he knew every tiny creek and every clambed in the bay and we concluded that the channel was undoubtedly the most devious of all waterways, for the course he steered was like the track of a drunkard.

He narrowly missed ramming a small launch at a sharp turn and mingled with the creaks of the boom and the cracking of the patched mainsail there came to our ears a volley of imprecations from the occupants of the power boat as it bumped along our rough, unpainted planks. Neither Kellogg nor I were versed in seamanship but we realized as well as the men in the launch that our skipper had done an awkward thing. However, the old salt answered the shower of curses with a cyclone of deepwater profanity that convinced us more firmly that he was a genuine, tarry, old lime-juicer!

We came so near going aground again as we tacked out of the Inlet that even Stunsell's scarlet cheeks paled slightly but we escaped a premature shipwreck only by the accident that the sea had formed a slew close to the sandy point and in this deep channel we came about and crossing the bar, were free at last of the embarrassing land. The wind blew gently from the southeast and putting up the helm we ran out up along the low coast. We had but a few miles to go and were jubilant, for we calculated to beach the old hulk before mid-afternoon.

Suddenly there loomed ahead four menhaden steam tugs. We watched them idly until the captain snarled:

"Where the dod-blasted darnation are them fools a-steerin'? They're drawin' right across our track!"

"You're heading out from shore pretty sharp anyhow, are you not?" inquired Norman. "You've got the beach dead astern!"

"Them cusses are trying ter ram us!" replied the captain excitedly, twirling the wheel around.

Each of the tugs' whistles emitted a sharp, menacing blast.

"What in —— do they mean by that?" he demanded, bringing his shaggy brows almost down to his nostrils. Again the tugs sounded petulant warnings.

"Gol ding it, let 'em get out o' the way!" he snarled, as we plowed directly at the largest steamer.

"Maybe we are running into their nets?" I hazarded, trying to recall what I had read about menhaden fishers.

Luckily, we managed to pass between the two foremost and the outpouring of profanity to which we were treated was a revelation. I had never before heard a unanimous bestowal of curses by an entire ship's company and I stood transfixed before its majestic volume and whole-hearted emphasis. The captain was utterly unable to compete and remained silent. It was, indeed, a notable incident.

"—— pirates, that's all they be!" he muttered sourly as they fell astern and their voices died away.

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THE wind now freshened and we judged that the time had arrived for us to impart to Stunsell the secret of our expedition. After several incoherent beginnings Norman managed to give him a faint idea of our intentions but he became so confused that he inadvertently ran the schooner almost into the first line of breakers. As we plowed seaward again he said—

"Why, ding my scuppers, why didn't ye tell me all this at the start?"

Kellogg explained our reasons for silence and the captain seemed to be vastly amused but declared that he was ready to do whatever we wished with the vessel and also expressed his opinion that our scheme was a wonderful conception. We now began to enjoy the trip, for the feeling that we were deceiving the honest old tar and perhaps imperiling his certificate had really been depressing to us both.

We boomed merrily along until Atlantic City's vast extent of hotels stretched endlessly over the port quarter and when we had reached the spot selected for her final resting-place, Stunsell put his helm to starboard and ran toward shore. Suddenly he remarked, thoughtfully:

"What d'e think? Hadn't we better wait till floodtide afore we sock her ashore? Git further up on the beach, ye know."

"Perhaps you are right," responded Norman dubiously surveying the foaming breakers almost under our bow.

Stunsell put the helm down hard and the old hooker came about handsomely. A billow larger than its fellows smote our port bow and as it passed beneath us broke with a hollow roar. Norman looked at me, startled and I returned the glance in silence. It was a thrilling forecast of what was to come and gave us a momentary sense of apprehension hitherto unfelt.

We ran out to sea and for several hours pursued an eccentric course, the old craft, according to Stunsell, behaving most atrociously, refusing to answer her helm and otherwise conducting herself in a provoking manner. It was four in the afternoon when at last we had the beach under her nose again and the breeze had fallen to a mere breath; still there was enough to carry her with considerable force upon the sand. She struck with a succession of shocks and seemed about to fall to pieces, groaning and creaking in every timber, then she swung broadside to the shore and keeled slightly over.

The breakers smote her sides with thunderous shocks and Stunsell took to the starboard shrouds, where we soon followed him, somewhat apprehensive for our safety. Now and then a billow lifted itself over the rail and poured a deluge over the slanting deck. The boardwalk and strand, two hundred feet or so distant, became in a twinkling black with excited spectators.

"Gol blame it!" shouted the captain. "Expected ter git in closer than this. It's them rocks that's a-holdin' her ter the bottom!"

"Do you think she'll stand this pounding?" roared Norman above the din of the breakers.

"She's all right," answered Stunsell. "But I guess we'll hev ter git my boat over ter loo'ard or she'll git smashed ter kindlin'!"

He clambered down to the deck, went astern and with much difficulty managed to haul the bateau around into comparatively smooth water where it thrashed about at its painter's end like an unruly colt. While thus engaged the crowd on the beach increased to a multitude and very soon our attention was especially attracted by certain wigwaggings from a pier which Stunsell admitted must be signals but which he confessed himself unable to interpret. A few minutes later something appeared far down the beach and as we watched it grew into a life-boat mounted on wheels and drawn by horses at full speed. It looked like a fire engine coming. In a twinkling it was opposite us; in another it was launched and before we had recovered from our surprise it was rising and falling like a chip alongside with its crew of amateur lifesavers grinning with self-appreciation.

"Now, then, boys, jump for it!" yelled the steersman, as the boat rose on the crest of a pea-green wave.

"Jump yer eye!" roared Stunsell. "What's eatin' youse lobsters? We ain't sent out no hurry-up call!"

The steersman plainly showed his astonishment. As the boat rose again he shouted—

"Aren't you coming off?"

"Come off yourself!" sneered the captain, biting off a sizeable chew from an eight-inch plug that I instantly recalled as among the items in our provision bill; and looking contemptuously down upon the amateur lifesavers.

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"You can't stay there tonight!" yelled the chief rescuer and added words that were inaudible as the boat fell away.

"He said somethin' about hurricane signals, I think," said Kellogg.

"Them fellers only wanter git ther names in the papers as life-savers, that's all!" grunted Stunsell. "Lettin' on they didn't see my boat right there alongside, b'gee!"

The boat swung around toward us again but a dispute seemed to divide the oarsmen and after a parley they seemed to be convinced that we were in earnest about remaining on the stranded vessel, for they rowed shoreward after voicing their opinions of us in decided tones.

"Are there any life-preservers on this old scow?" asked Norman as he measured the distance to shore.

"Not as I knows of," replied the skipper, carelessly. "The tide's going out, sure as shootin'! We held off too long! We kin walk ashore bimeby, almost, if we wanter, I guess."

This seemed quite likely, indeed, for in another hour the crowds on the beach had approached much nearer, so near that we could easily hear their comments upon our predicament and silly enough they were. The sea became strangely calm. The wind had failed entirely although a dark cloud was broadening into a vast curtain of dark gray, inland. The *Samuel H. Adams* seemed to have settled firmly and permanently to the bottom.

"I think it's a cinch!" quoth Kellogg, surveying the agitated spectators. "There's about twenty thousand dimes right there before our eyes! What's more, we're outside of anybody's riparian rights. You picked a good spot, Cap!"

We went below and ate a hearty meal of fried ham and eggs, washed down with bottled beer, lighted our cigars and as darkness approached over a perfectly calm sea assisted our chief officer and crew in hunting up a couple of antique lanterns to hang as riding lights although Kellogg had a hazy notion that these were not required by law to be affixed to a wreck. At about eight o'clock we turned in, leaving Stunsell on watch.

SOME time about midnight a terrific cannonade awoke me—thunder in sharp, stunning rolls, accompanied by incessant lightning flashes and the breaking of heavy seas against the schooner's side, solid masses of water rolling across the deck. I hurried aloft to find Kellogg standing by the mainmast gazing up at the inky heavens that split open in wide streaks of fire every second. The wind blew a hurricane from shore and every strand of rigging shrieked, whistled and moaned with a vehemence that was appalling to a landsman.

Each sounding billow, as it reared aloft and tore shoreward, met the gale and flung out behind a white mane that gleamed with a ghastly phosphorescence. These imparted to the Atlantic Ocean, by which we were entirely surrounded, the aspect of some gigantic graveyard filled with tall gleaming monuments amid green turf. It was an ominous comparison and made me shudder as I crept up beside my partner. Stunsell was busy by the light of one of the smoky lanterns making fast some loose tackle up forward.

"Pretty tough, old son!" yelled Norman. "What? All the same, it isn't any worse than we'd get if we were working for a moving-picture company, believe me! Catch hold of this binnacle rope and we'll work our way into the lee of the main ice-plant forward."

While his cheerful coolness gave me a slight degree of courage, I was convinced that we were in a dangerous situation. I turned my eyes shoreward. As I surveyed the spectacular illumination, wonderful as seen from seaward, I felt the schooner tremble throughout her whole fabric and then lurch sidewise. Instantly I realized that she was afloat and, landsmanlike, was terrified. Kellogg bellowed with the abandon of a fruit pedler and the old mariner came rolling along the slippery, slanting deck. Then came two sickening bumps, after which, miraculously, the *Samuel H. Adams* rose against the billows and began to plunge seaward with Stunsell, capless and bewildered, clutching the wheel.

"We're in for it now!" I yelled. "It's all up with the old tub and us, too! This is a regular cyclone!"

"Let's hear what Stunsell thinks. I'll ask him. You hang on to that rope!" shouted Norman and started for the poop-deck.

But before he reached the wheel a giant wave reared itself over the stern, bearing on its crest the captain's tiny cockleshell, Stunsell, aghast, dropped the wheel and fled—but tripped and fell. The next instant the wave broke inboard, hurling the

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overturned boat on top of the aged mariner as he lay wallowing in the scuppers. A cannonlike report sounded at the same instant and in the lightning's glare we saw the rotten old mainsail shredding out in rags and streamers with earsplitting detonations. In the calm, Stunsell had not deemed it needful to furl the old rag.

Muffled oaths and cries for help came from beneath the overturned dingey now firmly wedged between the rail and the wheel but we were afraid to venture to the captain's assistance. The schooner, partly relieved by the loss of the sail, rode on a level keel now but was scudding before the terrific gale at a rate which I estimated, by my experience with a Ford car's speed, at about seventy-five or eighty miles per hour. Providentially, I suppose, the wheel had been jammed by Stunsell's boat in suchwise that she steered a straight course and, fortunately for the imprisoned mariner, no more waves pooped her.

It was a terrible night. Fancy two daintily nurtured drummers, who had not in years ventured out in a storm without mackintoshes, umbrellas and overshoes, exposed to this unparallelled tempest in serge clothing of light weight and without hats! I marvel now at our power of resistance and at our heroic calm! The loss of the captain, for we were compelled by his total silence to believe that he had been drowned like a rat in a trap, filled us with sadness and dismay as well. But the awful peals of thunder, the incessant flashes of lightning and the horrible roar of the waves would have driven less courageous souls to madness, I believe.

I recalled the stories I had read of the vows made by seamen in peril and I made a vow myself that if I were saved from this scrape I would never venture to sea again. I think I registered that vow eighty-two times during the hours the *Samuel H. Adams* tore along on her mad pace toward Europe or Africa, for, of course, we had no knowledge of the points of the compass.

We succeeded in lashing ourselves to the mainmast, rightly considering that the solidest timber on the ship and the one most likely to float after she broke up as we expected her to do momentarily. We lashed ourselves so effectually with various loose ropes that we were soon enmeshed in a perfect tangle of coils and knots and with hearty regrets, keenest anguish of longing for daylight and a sickening dread of what lay under that overturned bateau, we clung to one another, wild-eyed and white through whole hours of terror. The most disheartening thing of all, perhaps, was the astounding facility that came to me during those perilous hours of recalling every dismal and tragic sea tale that I had ever read in my life.

Suddenly, toward dawn, a strange thing came to pass. The wind ceased abruptly and although the waves still rolled like mountains around us they buffeted us with less fury. The rags of the sails flapped like wings as the schooner tumbled about but she no longer drove ahead with an insane, blind fury. In the distance the thunder still roared and the lightnings flashed but we were at peace.

"By the great horn spoon," cried Kellogg, "I do believe we have run into the center of the cyclone! I have read about such a thing!" In the stillness his voice rang like a trumpet.

I began to untangle the rope-puzzle that enveloped us.

"Don't untie a single knot!" cautioned Norman. "The storm will be upon us again, worse than ever, only from another direction. I read a story of Jack London's that described just such conditions."

"I am going to see if Captain Stunsell is dead or not!" I answered with firmness, continuing my efforts. "I can't stand this suspense!"

Norman reluctantly began to assist me and in a few minutes we were free from the ropes. We lifted the bateau and there lay the aged mariner fast asleep! A marked and wide-spreading aroma of liquor enveloped him. He opened his solitary eye as I prodded him and muttered—

"Rot my timbers! 'Tain't time ter git up already!"

We quickly realized that he was quite intoxicated. He raised himself with great difficulty and felt about him, slowly gathering his wits. We stared in dumb amazement for a space, then I asked—

"Where did you get it?"

"Git what, me bucko?" he mumbled.

"The load, man! Where did you get the booze?"

"Ha! Had a couple bottles in the stern locker, mate. Most twisted my spine gittin' at 'em but I managed it and I reckon they saved my life! Derned ef I didn't

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think I was sound asleep in old Pop Meddall's tavern in Tuckahoe!"

I wrung my hands in despair, paralyzed by a sudden sense of our complete helplessness, for in this awful situation nothing but a sailor's skilful management could save us. I felt sick and faint at the thought that our precious lives depended on this rumsoaked human derelict.

At that time I had not fathomed Telescope Bill's capacity for ordinary "case goods."

As I gazed at that sodden, bloated countenance, the dull, bleary eye lighted with a mariner's keen speculation, it roamed over the disordered deck for an instant, then Stunsell leaped to his feet and standing like a Nelson or a Farragut he swept with his gaze the pallid, dawn-lit ocean. I could trace the swift passage of thought through his resourceful brain as this or that sailor's expedient came to mind and I waited feverishly for the sharp word of command to fall from his lips. Norman nudged me with appreciative comprehension.

Captain Stunsell took a chew of tobacco and placing his hands on his hips, asked petulantly:

"Where in —— d'ya 'spose we kin be anyhow?"

No commands, no instructions, simply this fool query! Somehow, it shook my trusting faith in the man and launched me on a sea of doubt. A suspicion of his courage was born that in another moment grew into a suspicion of his seamanship, for he sat down on the gunwale of the small boat and stared blankly at us.

"Come! We must do something! The storm will be upon us presently and we have no time to idle, Cap!"

"What the dernation kin we do? That's what pesterin' me!" declared Stunsell.

"Holy smoke! What is usually done in such a case?" I cried.

"Can't we heave the log or take soundings or belay something?" demanded Norman. "This is awful, standing here doing nothing!"

Stunsell spat prodigiously and grunted—

"I calculate ye can't do nothin' when ye don't know what ter do!"

His supernatural calm impressed us callow landlubbers and some of our terror passed. He added after a moment:

"Biled down and cooled off, the situation is that we're still afloat, with no sandbars in sight, so I guess we kin plan ter wait fer daylight."

"Will you take the sun then?" I asked. He stared dully at me, then rubbed his chin, spat disgustedly and replied—

"I ain't read a line in that dirty sheet sence Dana tuk up with Ben Butler!"

"What do you mean?" I gasped, thinking him daft and sensing a chill thrill of fear.

"I take the *Tribune*—the *Weekly Tribune-Farmer* and that's about good enough fer any Republican!" he grunted.

A roar of laughter from Norman startled me. He took me by the arm and led me abaft the foremast, well out of earshot of Stunsell, where he said in a tone of conviction:

"I am on to the miserable old scoundrel at last! He has conned us good and plenty. We are a pair of suckers, pure and simple and he's done us. I'll bet a hundred he's only a canal-boat or a coal-barge sailor and he knows no more about navigation than we do. What are we going to do about it?"

The idea of asking a man a question like that in the middle of the Atlantic, during a pause in a first-class cyclone, did not at the moment strike me as comical. It has since. I cared nothing for Stunsell's character nor was I worrying over his deception. The horror of our position excluded such trivial matters from consideration and I wasted no thought upon the drunkard. Our peril alone controlled me.

Oh, why had I wasted precious hours learning chess, mechanical drawing, physical culture and stenography instead of the inestimable art and mystery of seamanship? I recall that it even occurred to me with a dull wonder that I had never read an advertisement in a magazine of a correspondence school that dealt with that branch of human knowledge.

"We can't waste time on that poor fish!" I said after a moment's contemplation of the stolid Stunsell leaning against the starboard rail. "We've got to find out how to steer this old tub back to land without him. Of course, some of those menhaden boats may come along at any time or some coast steamer, and tow us in to some port but we can't be sure of that. The only trouble is that I can't tell north from south in this sort of weather.

"What's the dinky compass for?" demanded Norman. "What sort of a commodore were you if you can't box the compass?"

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WE BEGAN without indulging in mutual recriminations, as many men might have done, to cast about, Crusoe-like, to discover what mental equipment we possessed to deal with this situation. My knowledge of the sea was acquired by the perusal of Clark Russell, Frank Bullen, Morgan Robertson, Jack London and, in remote ages, Marryat and Cooper. I now discovered, alas, that all my reading had somehow been confined to romances that dealt with ships of the line, barks, brigs, frigates and galleons and, rack my brains as I would, I could not dig up a single case of a schooner figuring in marine literature.

In fact, anything less romantic than the *Samuel H. Adams* could scarce be imagined. An expert seaman or an artist might, perhaps, have seen in her lines something of grace and shiply beauty in spite of rusty ironwork and lack of paint but nothing about her recalled to my mind a single expedient that might avail us. True, I thought of a sea-anchor but did not know what it was used for and of provisioning Stunsell's boat and of making a raft and then the pumps came to my mind with a sort of shock.

"Good Heaven! Norman, I wonder if the old scow is leaking!" I groaned.

He ran to the port pump and worked at it with professional skill, then as he darted to starboard he said—

"It's out of business!"

A moment's manipulation of the starboard pump brought forth a clear stream of water. Testing the well, showed two feet of water in the hold. Even to landsmen this was portentous. I was about to appeal to Stunsell from force of habit when the old man came running forward, yelling, "The wind! the wind!" and waving his hands.

I turned to see, rushing out of the gray haze of the morning, a black mass fronted with a moraine of foam, with towers and turrets outlined against the dawn, moving with railroad speed toward us. We fled to the mainmast and with trembling fingers hastily bound ourselves to that worm-eaten and weather-worn bit of timber. The wall of water turned ere it reached us to a giant comber and curling, it fell, with a roar like a thousand Niagaras, burying the schooner in a smother of hissing foam and plunging her deep in the sea. As she rose the gale seized her and, looking upward, I saw the mast bend like a strip of whalebone.

I did not expect to survive. All hope of emerging from this dilemma had totally left me and it was with a strange, unnatural calm that I awaited the end. Afterward my beloved mother, endeavoring to ascertain my mental attitude at this moment, asked if all the events of my previous life did not then pass in review before me as they always do before those doomed to death but I disgusted her by stating that I merely marveled that the rotten old mast held together so well. As I was not doomed to die I was not disappointed that such a review failed to come off; beside there are things I do not want brought up.

Laboring heavily, like some human swimmer, the schooner struggled and freeing herself of her load, darted before the blast. We breathed with difficulty for the wind tore at our lips, filled our eyes with brine and almost dragged us from the mast. The flying spume was like a snowstorm, enshrouding us in a white pall that hid everything a few yards distant and the din was appalling. Every plank, timber and spar voiced a separate death-song while the yards shrieked with the tones of demons.

It is comforting to read a narrative written in the first person for there is always the consolation that the hero has not perished in spite of his agonies. A watery grave seemed to be as surely our fate during these hours as ever men contemplated. A gray and gloomy day broke gradually and by affording us a wider vision increased our terrors but as the hours dragged on the gale sensibly lessened. Toward noon the sun's position was visible at times and showed that we were being swept south, while the air grew warmer; but later in the day the clouds thickened, assumed a purplish-black hue and an icy chill struck to our bones.

"We're a-goin' ter have a hailstorm, sure as Satan!" predicted Stunsell. "Can't fool me! Never see that there plum color in the sky 'thout it meant hail and a-plenty, too." He began to fumble with the rope that bound him. "I'm thinking that if we're a-going ter be lost at sea we ain't obliged ter feeeze ner yit ter starve ter death fust and if I sink I'm a-goin' ter sink with a full belly, blister my soul!"

He dropped the rope and the schooner being for an instant on an even keel, darted

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for the deckhouse and vanished within its shelter. The mere pangs of hunger or cold could not have induced us to follow his example but when, a few minutes later, hailstones as large as eggs began to slash the decayed decks like shrapnel we realized an actual peril. Before we had unlashed ourselves and crawled stiffly into the cabin we bore, each of us, dozens of painful bruises that left black-and-blue reminders upon our bodies for days. The downpour lasted for only a few minutes but it piled the deck with drifts of ice, the only added touch possible to constitute a finished picture of misfortune.

This tremendous fall of hailstones flattened the sea as by a miracle and was followed by a gentle, warm wind that before sunset had dried our garments and heartened us to take some needed refreshment but we dared not go to sleep. It was evident even to our un-nautical eyes that the *Samuel H. Adams* lay deeper in the water than before. She was laboring and lurching with a new motion that needed no recollection of a Clark Russell tale to solve its meaning, a soggy, sodden roll like that of a floating sponge and the slosh of water beneath our feet came plain enough to our ears.

We filled three jugs with water and placed them, with a tin of ship biscuit in the captain's bateau although the tiny shell would carry but two men and it was evident, although we did not discuss the matter, that one of us was doomed to remain on the sinking craft in the event of her desertion. In the night the breeze freshened again and the groaning and creaking of her timbers almost drove me frantic. Yet toward morning I fell asleep in my bunk from sheer weariness and knew no more of misery until the following noon. When I awoke and hurried on deck the sea was sparkling with silvery ripples and the sky was one sapphire vault without a cloud. Flying-fish were scudding away before us.

Stunsell was trying to pry the lid off the compass with a screw-driver and perspiring profusely; Norman stood beside him with a rusty hatchet.

"This infernal thing is petrified!" snapped my partner. "We've been steering by it for hours and only just now discovered that the needle is rusted fast! I'll bet you couldn't move it with a monkey-wrench! Let me hit it a poke with this tommyhawk and smash the glass! The blame thing is of no use to us as it is, that's sure!"

He smashed the glass and for an hour we tinkered with the antique bit of junk until the needle, scraped and oiled, spun merrily upon its pivot but still we ran before the breeze on our previous course. For our only remaining scrap of sail was the jib, a bit of canvas so rotten that it seemed a miracle that its mildewed pulpy fabric held together for a minute, therefore altering our course was not to be thought of. It was, however, a slight consolation to feel that at least we knew in what direction we were being borne and had not the knowledge of an ever-increasing depth of water in the hold of our craft drowned every thought of hope we might even have been gay over our escape from the hurricane.

"Wherever we're bound 'tain't toward Tuckahoe!" grumbled the aged imposter as he held the swaying wheel. "And what's more t' th' p'int, we ain't makin' no speed 'bout it, neither! If signs be th' same as 'round home I'm predictin' a spell o' what ya might call right good corn-plantin' weather but a helluva lot o' good that'll do us! By the same token a good day ter beat carpets ain't no day ter beat ter wind'ard."

We had no comment to make on his philosophy and sat in gloomy silence on the bateau's gunwale.

"I reckon we ain't a mite wuss off than them fellers in the trenches over there in Yurrup, when ya come ter think of it. That there bombardment we just had wouldn't be no more'n feathers fallin' fer them boys but I'll bet a machine gun couldn't pelt the bullets any faster, than them hailstuns came! Hey? Well, we hain't got any assphyxiatin' bombs in ours, anyhow, nor nobody squirtin' no burnin' fluid at us and, what's more, we kin stand right up and take a look 'round without gittin' our heads blowed off.

"I kinder guess, though, ef I was pickin' a good safe place I'd take one o' them Zepp'lins just this minute. Beats ——, don't it now, what improvements and new inventions they do git in some places yet back there in old Tuckahoe they hain't had nothin' new in a hunderd years 'cept autymobiles and movie pictures and ya might say them was forced on 'em. Yessir, if a feller didn't git out o' there, up ter Camden or New Berlin, oncet in a while and brush up among the live ones, he'd git ter be a reglar

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vegetarian! Hum! Hah! And here we be in 'bout as purty a pickle as a skunk in a fox trap!"

He let go of the wheel, stretched himself and yawned, then glancing at the sun, added:

"We got good grub aboard and we got ants, bigger'n buzzards and we might as well beat 'em to th' eats. You jest take th' wheel and hold her stiddy while I go and open up 'bout a hunderd o' them oysters and fry some ham. Might as well have a jelly omelet, too, while we're 'bout it. What d'ya think?"

Kellogg opened lack-luster eyes that revealed no comprehension of his surroundings and it suddenly struck me that I was the only one who had stolen a wink of sleep. I nodded to the aged mariner and without a word he bore my partner away and placed him in his berth. Soon after the wind died by degrees until not a breath stirred the remnants of sail draped from the gaffs. The sea settled astonishingly soon to a wondrous calm and the *Samuel H. Adams* no longer moved except for a lazy roll as the imperceptible ocean swell lifted her.

The still air was filled with the aroma of frying ham, the steady clink-clink of Telescope Bill's oyster-knife and Norman's gentle snoring and the thought stabbed me with sudden anguish that within a few hours, indeed, for all I knew, a few minutes, two promising young lives would be snuffed out or rather, to use a simile more in keeping with modern illuminating methods, be switched off.

I gave no thought to Stunsell's existence at all; the old scoundrel deserved to die. It was solely his incompetence that had brought us to this pass and even in our extremity the miserable half-portion of a sea-spider had not gumption enough to start building a raft. As this bitter reflection came to me I gasped for breath. Why had not this perfectly natural and entirely nautical resource suggested itself to me before?

Dropping the useless wheel I rushed into the deck-house with a yell that caused old Bill to leap up in terror and almost drop a bottle of Scotch he was about to uncork.

"Hurry up here, you old walrus!" I snapped. "Drop that booze and get our grub ready! Don't you dare lose a minute unless you want seven bells knocked into you with a marlinspike!"

"What's the hurry?" he asked, placing the bottle gently on the deck and regarding me with a searching gaze.

"We've got to build a raft and build it pretty —— sudden!" I roared. "You cheap imitation of a jelly-fish, here's where you do a little ax-work for once if you ever expect to step on dry land again!"

"Scuttle me if you ain't got a head on yer shoulders, Cap! How d'ya ever come ter think o' that?" he answered.

III

ONCE in action, Telescope Bill's performance with an ax was beyond criticism. He scrambled awkwardly enough up the ratlines but once aloft, the tops, the gaffs and the booms fell like leaves! Sections of the rail followed swiftly and when, three hours later, Norman awoke greatly refreshed he was amazed to find the deck astern looking like the business end of a shipyard.

"This here means that we're a-goin' ter save ourselves and what's more, we ain't a-goin' ter leave none o' them good provisions behind, my bucko boy!" explained Stunsell, once more affecting nautical phraseology. "Cap Wharton he quit frettin' and got her thinkin' an' the result is were a-buildin' what 'pears to be some raft."

Kellogg's gaze revealed a mixture of admiration and mortification. I saw at once that he marveled that he had not thought of this expedient. Presently he began to make suggestions but we drove him into the deckhouse to eat what was left of the ham and oysters.

"It's lucky I brought my old kit o' tools, ain't it now?" soliloquized Stunsell. "I was deplorin' that I had no place ter leave 'em in Tuckahoe, homeless old skate that I be, gol bing! We couldn't 'a' done much with the bum ax and that cast-iron hatchet that was aboard, could we? Now, ef we wanter, we could build a picket fence 'round this here raft! hey?"

With the tops, booms and larger timbers as a foundation, lashed together with ropes and spiked with huge rusty nails drawn from the rotten planks we constructed a raft that we could not help regarding, as we paused from time to time, with intense admiration. Stunsell had helped build many a wharf and could do more with an ax than most men with a whole kit of carpenter's tools and the

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experience I had gained, years ago, in constructing a bookcase, now came in handy. Kellogg was utterly useless in this work except to haul timber and we made him feel his inferiority as we hammered and sawed and the raft grew into a thing of beauty.

The calm continued and we toiled diligently but with less anxious haste all next day. Flying fish frequently flopped upon the deck and ere noon we had collected enough of these dainties to furnish forth a repast fit for a Lucullus.

"It's a pretty fair piece of work!" commented Kellogg, patronizingly. "If it doesn't sink with the old scow we are all right."

"It's just like the life-rafts on the big steamers!" I explained for the third time. "If it sinks it's got to come up and we'll be sitting there, a little ways off, in the small boat, waiting for it."

"Yes and dad blast my hawse holes, we gotter lash all our stuff up in tarpaulin in case she does take a dip, gol bing it!" exclaimed old Bill, leaping up and hurrying forward to gather up the fragments of sail scattered about.

The roof of the deckhouse being of material a dozen years fresher than the rest of the *Samuel H. Adams*, had served as planking for the raft and Norman and I took refuge in the shade of the jib, for we were saturated with perspiration and the sun beat upon us a concentrated blaze that heated the tools as if in a furnace. One could have pressed his trousers with the ax.

"She's getting pretty near the limit!" said Norman, squinting over the side. "Have you looked below lately?"

"Nix on that stuff! What would I be looking below for?" I retorted. "Am I not nervous enough already without prying into that matter. Don't you know that we're all right until the deck blows up. That's got to happen before she goes down, you flatfooted sandsnipe!"

"And where'll we be when the deck blows up, you tinhorn duckpond commodore? Do we sit here and get our pants full of two-foot splinters while the fireworks are being pulled off? Does the bally deck shoot off in the middle or will it be a double-header? How many decks—except pinocle decks—have you ever seen busted, anyhow?" he asked, scornfully. "I suppose you expect to sit here until she begins to pop and then beat it for the boat. What?"

I was not prepared to answer his questions as I had only at that moment thought of the usual preliminary, in all sea-tales, of the sinking of a vessel but I hastened to consult Telescope Bill regarding this new danger. As I stood erect on the raised forward deck my eye caught the glint of something white shining softly and faintly, like a rose leaf, on the misty, shimmering horizon. For a moment it made no impression upon my senses and I had taken a stride before its meaning smote me and staggered me.

"A sail! A sail!" I yelled and began to dance like a madman.

Stunsell began a frantic search for his telescope but by the time he had adjusted its four sections to his eyesight the gleam of white in the south-east had melted into the mist. We stared across the dazzling glare until Kellogg declared that he felt the first symptoms of blind staggers but which was indubitably the result of the effort to see through Stunsell's telescope. Later in the day I distinctly heard old Bill say:

"Pore feller! His sufferin's has turned his head. That's the worst o' gettin' on the water wagon—it knocks a man's jedgement o' distances and things. S'pose that comes from bein' in an un-natural state all the time, sorter pinin' fer the flesh-pots, until in the course o' time he finally gits ter seein' things that ain't there. Now, I've heard tell o' fellers seeing double when in licker—although I can't say I was ever so far gone myself——"

"You never owned a distillery, I suppose?" queried Norman, with scarcely veiled sarcasm.

"Well, now, d'ya know its a dern funny thing that I never see a distillery in my life. There never was one in our country durin' my time."

"Likely enough," Kellogg agreed. "Distillers are not taking chances any more than other people. They risk enough, probably, as it is."

I began to question whether what I had seen was a sail or a mirage when suddenly it gleamed out again. I preserved silence but kept my gaze fixed upon the speck of white until I reached the binnacle and was able to fix the point on the compass, south west, by south, where it showed. As I looked it slowly faded but I was convinced that I had seen the sunlight reflected from something larger and more stationary than a bird's wing or a wave's flashing crest.

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Now that I knew where to look for it I was able to reflect calmly that it must be miles away, idling, like the *Samuel H. Adams*, on a windless sea and turning now and then a sail toward the sun. I took up Bill's telescope and laid it over the rail and began the process of focusing the mystic instrument, when suddenly the ship leaped out at me!

There she lay, perhaps six or seven miles off, a three-masted vessel with jib and two foresails set, a bark, although, of course, I must admit that I did not know this; my knowledge of bark was confined to tan, dog and Peruvian.

"I've struck the combination on this old gaspipe!" I said with forced levity, handing the telescope to Norman. "Take a peek and tell me whether that's an Erie ferry-boat or a real, honest to gosh ship, southwest by south, two points south on the starboard beam-end, but don't wiggle the glass."

He looked and started, then glued his eye to the tiny opening again.

"You seem surprised!" I jeered. "Hereafter, when your Uncle Lemuel says he sees a sail in the offing, expect to see a sail, not a ringtailed diplodocus. Stunsell, give a look and tell me if she's not flying the flag of the Swiss navy."

"Stave my planks if I was ever able to see a —— thing through that spy-glass before!" confessed the old reprobate after he had sighted the bark. "It'd be a good idee ter solder her fast as she is. Yessir, that's a ship, all right, my bucko, I kin see her with the naked eye now! I don't see no flag fer the reason that she ain't a-flyin' none," he added after a long scrutiny through the glass. "I hain't seen a rig like that fer quite a spell o' years although they do say that sence the war the's been a plenty of 'em around Baltimore and Philadelphy, furriners mostly and I guess she's one of 'em."

"She is too far away to see any signals we might make, I suppose," grumbled Norman.

"And if she saw our signals, she couldn't git ter us so long as it's as calm as this," added Bill. "I tell ya, boys, I, fer one, ain't placin' no dependence on *her*. Me fer the bully little raft, b'gee!"

WE WATCHED the distant speck until the sun went down. It seemed to our excited, yearning vision that she showed plainer in the last glow of light, as if nearer. Once in the night as we strained our eyes for a gleam of her lights, a catspaw or two of light wind ruffled the dark water, coming from the southeast. We felt the breath of air with mingled emotions for a breeze was as likely to bear her away as to bring her toward us. I must have fallen asleep standing at the rail for on hearing Stunsell sing out—"Breakfast is ready, Cap," I awoke to find the rim of the sun just clearing the horizon.

"We calculated ter let ya sleep jest as long as ya would, seein' ya was comfortable on that there bundle o' nice, soft tin cans. There's yer ship off yonder and it seems ter me she's actin' as if she was gittin' the least mite o' wind," said the aged mariner. "I'm thinkin' they've seen us fer she's kinder actin' queer ever sence we spotted her 'bout daybreak."

The sea was calmer, if possible, than before but a mile or so away the bark was moving slowly, gleaming yellowish-white against the purple haze of the western sky. But as we watched she described a great half-circle and then came up into the faint wind and hung for a space, her sails swaying. Gradually she swung around and fetched around and fetched another eccentric curve but her course, it was plain to my unnautical eyes, would never bring her nearer our doomed craft.

Yet, drawn by that mysterious attraction inherent in floating bodies, as the hours passed she gradually edged toward us, shyly and reluctantly, but surely. Long before she was within hailing distance we had decided that no human beings were aboard and many were the guesses we hazarded to explain the desertion of such a perfectly good ship. It was Stunsell's opinion that smallpox or the bubonic plague had broken out and her crew had taken to the boats, as her davits plainly showed that her boats had been lowered. While I was searching my memories to find a pleasanter surmise the old man slid into his bateau, now afloat for many hours and remarked as he placed the oars in the tholes:

"One o' ye git in here with me and we'll pretty quick git a decision. I'm a-goin' ter board her afore this here breeze freshens."

As neither of us leaped forward to join him he pulled out his plug and bit off a man's portion and then with a twist of the oars backed the boat alongside. The deck of the schooner was now but some fifteen inches from the water and now and then the

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swell lifted the boat to the deck's level. There was no time to dally over procedure. With a rush of noble self-abnegation I pushed Kellogg into the little bateau and waved them away, saying—

"Hurry! If I have to swim for it pick me up as soon as you can."

"I'll be back in two shakes of a pepper-box!" shouted old Bill, hitting a thirty-four-to-the-minute stroke.

I watched Norman clumsily warp his length up a rope ladder that hung astern of the bark but Bill was on his way back to me ere my partner had climbed over the rail.

"Pass in that there smallish package o' lifesavin' necessities,—will yer?" suggested Stunsell as he drew alongside. "That there ship may be all out o' medicine, ya know, considering that they've had bubonic plague or somethin' aboard and we may need ter disinfect, mebbe."

In ten minutes I had joined Norman but Bill did not follow me up the rope ladder. To my amazement I saw him returning to the schooner and for an instant felt a keen pang of regret that the aged seaman had resolved to sink with his ship, so imbued was I with the romance of the sea but as I beheld him hustling various canvas-wrapped bundles into his boat my common sense reasserted itself. Kellogg hauled aboard by a rope the package Stunsell had attached to it, lifting it over the rail with care.

"Looks as if he were of a saving disposition. He's going to rescue the cats, as well as the drinks," he said as he tossed the rope's end overboard again. "I'll bet he'll have a tough time, though, without a diver, when he comes to getting out that ice!"

"In some ways, Norman, you are more varieties of a —— fool than you show. I know that you feel like breaking down and weeping for joy because you've got solid ground, I mean planks, under your big feet but you affect a *sang froid* that is sickening. What we want to do is to get busy and try to steer this ship toward the schooner and help that old chap. The wind is freshening and we can't tell where this craft will shoot next if it gets any stronger."

As an outlet to my own emotions I grasped the wheel and it was with a feeling of ~~t~~ingling delight, mixed with a sense of awe, that I felt the bark respond to the slightest turn. She moved forward as the gentle breeze filled her sails like a living thing and seemed to dash toward the *Samuel H. Adams*, now almost awash.

"Jibe her! Jibe her!" yelled Stunsell, waving his arms excitedly as we bore down upon him.

I swung the wheel around at random and, luckily, brought her up into the wind within three yards of the schooner and in a trice we had the bateau's painter aboard and tied fast.

IV

THE wind freshened. Although without experience in the handling of a square-rigged vessel, my clever handling of the bark when collision seemed imminent naturally placed me at the wheel and although I felt a sort of terror as she tore through the water and carefully forbore from doing anything but keep her before the wind, yet there was mingled with this terror, glorious thrills. After the sodden sloshing of the *Samuel H. Adams* the wondrous buoyancy, the lifelike responsiveness and the bird-like dash of the bark, the name of which, I forgot to state, was the *Bon Ami*, of Lyons, France, filled me with a sense of boundless power and mastery. Lifting my eyes alternately from the compass to the tops of the tall masts as she rose upon each wave with proud majestic courtesying I felt as if in control of some monster of the deep.

"Ha!" I soliloquized, aloud. This is the life! Something like! Something like! A bit different from plugging down the old canal in a flat-bottomed packing-case with an Everrude coffee-mill smelling up the scenery! What?"

While I steered my companions were investigating below decks and it seemed to me that at intervals there came to my ears inexplicable sounds as if the two were quarreling, yet there was something inarticulate and unbalanced in these sounds, brutish, inhuman noises, growls, squeals and chatterings that made me doubt my ears. Could there be insane, raving men aboard? There was nothing, certainly, too improbable to occur under the circumstances.

I was compelled at first to pay such attention to the bark's coltish actions that these sounds did not distract me. The foresails were set for a wind slightly off the starboard and not directly astern, hence she bore always, in this westerly breeze, toward

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the south as I kept the sails filled. After nearly an hour had passed without the appearance of my companions the wind sank to a mere breath and the *Bon Ami* no longer obeyed my touch.

Just as I was about to go below a series of perfectly terrifying roars held me paralyzed. Each resounding, deep-toned blare was louder, more resonant than the preceding until the thunder died away in a muffled rumbling exactly like the roar of a lion. Hardly had the awful sounds ceased reverberating through the ship than Norman and Stunsell emerged with pale faces from the companionway. Norman carried a few sheets of paper.

There isn't a human being aboard but we've found out that the ship is French. Her papers are gone, unless we did not look in the right place for them, and there is nothing to show why she has been deserted. Actually nothing seems to have been disturbed——"

"What made that noise?' I asked Stunsell.

"That's nothing at all but a regular ripsnorter of a big he-lion. Gol bing! When he let out that there roar I mighty nigh jumped clean out o' my pants! And he seemed right glad ter see us, too! Didn't he?" He turned to Norman.

"He sure did! When I walked right up to his cage without seeing him in the darkness he didn't do a thing but reach for me and he blame near got me. He has claws like meat-hooks!" said Kellogg shuddering and making a grimace.

"And there's a royal Bengal tiger but he 'pears ter be sick or somethin' fer he didn't seem ter take no notice of us, s'far as I could see, and there's a couple o' smallish bears with white rings 'round their necks and a sort o' wallapus that we couldn't make head or tail of," added Stunsell.

"There's a box that looks to me as if it was full of snakes!" contributed Kellogg." A whole cage-full of assorted monkeys and the biggest chimpanzee I ever saw! Birds too, pheasants and some sort of chickens——"

"Yep and a cuss that looks like a cross between a mule and a deer, with corkscrews fer horns!" Stunsell added. "I reckon we didn't see more'n half the show, either."

"Good Lord! Have we fallen upon the ark?" I asked in bewilderment, not being aware that such a consignment of wild animals is a common enough matter in shipping annals.

"From the smell you'd jedge so," declared old Bill. "But what puzzles me is why did they leave the ship?"

For days this riddle plagued us. We learned by degrees to manage the sails and adjust them to the baffling breezes, to feed the animals and even to decipher, by the aid of a dictionary, many of the papers and books we discovered but for days we remained in ignorance of the cause of the desertion of the *Bon Ami*.

All my life I have been passionately fond of animals, a passion that had been gratified only by cats, dogs and rabbits, and now I was able to indulge it to the limit. The care of the vessel I left almost entirely to the others almost from the moment I beheld the wealth of animal life enclosed between the decks of the French bark. The poor creatures, famishing and athirst, almost without exception welcomed my kindly offices without fear or antipathy; the chimpanzee, with fully the human intelligence of a Stunsell or a Kellogg without their bad habits or prejudices, became at once a friend and a comrade.

I released him from his cage within two hours after we became acquainted and he soon took his place as our equal on deck and our superior aloft. To see him shinny out on a yard and haul in a sail was a delight. He wore a yachting cap with far more dignity, peered through the telescope with deeper gravity than any of us and his table manners were almost irreproachable.

With the lion and the tiger I was successful although the process of overcoming their natural fear of man took longer but they surrendered to my blandishments in an astonishingly short time and came like cats to be scratched and rubbed. The so called "wallapus" proved to be a warthog, perhaps the unhandsomest beast alive but a sociable and amiable one who never failed, day or night, to manifest the liveliest affection for me as soon as I appeared.

At our meals we held consultations regarding the problems that confronted us hourly. The weather continued to be fine but the winds were light, shifting, and invariably after we had laboriously adjusted the few sails we dared to carry, died out and were succeeded by prolonged calms during which periods we occupied ourselves by overhauling the cargo.

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Marvelous things we found. It seemed to us that citizens of France were shipping the treasures of centuries in that one vessel, for there were bales of priceless tapestries, great hogsheads of porcelains, bronzes, ivory carvings, paintings, silks and velvets, ancient manuscripts and suits of inlaid armor, silverware and dainty underwear, almost every imaginable article of value was to be found between her decks, without mentioning two gigantic safes the combinations of which we never learned. We became not only very efficient seamen but, I am convinced, quite competent to act as curators of an art museum before we even penetrated to the lower deck where bulkier freight in casks and heavy cases, was packed.

Without the least notion of our latitude or longitude we were aware that at the end of each cloudless day we had been borne by the unseen currents farther to the south. The heat increased until the seams in the decks fairly squirted pitch; we were tanned to the hue of a Connecticut wrapper and the sea stewed, distilling a warm mist.

It was fortunate that our zoo consisted only of tropical animals but even they suffered so evidently between decks that I conducted many of them up into the fresh air. In fact, the warthog and the two bears constantly contested for shaded spots on the main deck, never going below; but it was unsafe to permit such liberties to the lion or tiger, for it was apparent that their tameness was merely a personal liking for me. Let Stunsell or Kellogg approach and they bristled like shoe brushes, while the distant view of "Peter Pan," the chimpanzee, or "Spikes," the warthog, sent them into their primeval ferocity in a flash.

SIX days passed; in futile industry during the early and the late hours —nothing but a salamander could do anything after that tropic sun had arisen forty-five degrees but swelter in the humid shade. At night the animals gave a cabaret show but we learned to slumber sweetly through the entertainment and at dawn awoke to the shrieks of parrots, the piping of linnets and the croaks of hornbills, and resumed our duties, the discovering and unpacking of new wonders upon which to speculate.

"We have lost our jobs, that's a cinch!" declared Kellogg." "Somebody's already out on my beat, getting acquainted with my customers and telling them about my mysterious disappearance——"

"Yep and a-hintin' that, more'n likely, there's a woman mixed up in it." suggested old Bill with a hideous grin.

"Let 'em hint!" growled Kellogg. "I should worry, with all the Christmas presents and objects *de vertoo* and drummer's samples collected here! Why, if we can get this ship into port we'll have more money than four banks!"

"'Thout we don't git robbed by the lawyers!" grunted Stunsell. "But, lemme tell ya, the good ship *Bone Amy* is adriftin' somewhere toward Afriky, I guess, but it 'pears t' me that we've hit some sorter spot where we may stick all Summer, fer we ain't had a breath o' wind now fer three days!"

A sudden recollection smote me with stunning force.

"The doldrums!" I exclaimed. "The region of perpetual calm! by Hadly! That's where we are! We're in the doldrums!"

"Doldrums, doldrums?" echoed Norman. "I've heard the word but I always thought it meant something like the blues or the doleful dumps. I never supposed it was a place——"

"And the next thing is the Sargasso Sea!" I groaned in genuine alarm for there leaped into my mind the woful tales of ships lost in "the graveyard of the sea," that lonely stretch of seaweed in the middle of a deserted ocean.

I soon brought my companions to the same state of alarm when I had described the region to which I was sure that we were drifting. From the height of elation to which our riches had lifted us we were hurled into the deepest gulf of despondency by the realization that we had drifted into a part of the Atlantic unvisited by any ships but the derelict.

Curiosly enough, it was while thus depressed that we came upon the solution of the ship's desertion. Stunsell, in an effort to divert his mind had solved the mystery, by accident, of the *Bon Ami's* electric storage batteries and in testing his discovery had switched on the lights of the lower deck. Into this hitherto neglected region Kellogg ventured to descend but in a few minutes came dashing out, with consternation depicted in his pallid features and crouching gait. I instantly concluded that he had happened upon a consignment of boa-constrictors stored in the hold.

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"My God, Wharton! Listen! There's a bomb down there as big as a beer keg all ready to pop off! I blame near fell over it!" he gibbered hoarsely, clutching my sleeve.

I have always wondered why it is that big men are usually more timorous than the little fellows and have decided that it is because there is so much more of them to care for and protect from injury. Now I felt no more concern over the presence of a bomb in our cargo than for that of a beehive, if as much.

"You big simp," I growled, shaking off his nervous grip. "What d' ye mean, a bomb? If it isn't lighted what can a bomb do to us? Lead me to it!"

I called to Stunsell and we went below. About amidship, in a narrow aisle between bales, casks and packing-cases, we came upon the object that gave us the clue to the condition of the *Bon Ami*. It was a shining steel and brass shell, from the firing-pin of which, delicate as a bit of jewelry, trailed an insulated wire along the deck, ending in a large coil. As I pondered upon this strange find old Bill uttered a grunt and then said:

"Submarines, by jinks! I seen a picter of one o' them bums in the Sunday *Trybune!* It's as plain as a cow's foot when ya come ter think of it. Boats gone, papers missin', and this here bum most ready ter set off!"

"I see!" I agreed. "Something frightened them off, probably, before they were able to finish their work, an Allied war-ship, I suppose. That explanation certainly seems to fill the bill."

"But why didn't the crew come aboard again if the U-boat withdrew?" demanded Kellogg.

"Mebbe there was a sea on and they couldn't ketch up with this old dancer," suggested Bill. "There was an all-fired lot o' wind, ya remember, jest afore we fell in with her."

"Yes and it must have happened only a few hours before that gale hit us or else the animals would have perished of thirst and starvation." I added. "This shows that they are operating in the middle of the Atlantic!"

"Tain't worryin' me none!" snickered Stunsell. "But I s'pose yer calculatin' ter dump this here sample o' hell-fire overboard without no debate, fellers? Ya see it's got handles ter make the job easy. I'll git a pair o' cuttin'-pliers first and nip the wire but I guess the thing has ter be sot off by a battery and they'd have that off on a boat, I guess."

We dropped the terrible menace overboard with neatness and dispatch a few minutes later and so great was our relief that for hours we never thought of the equally terrible menace of the Sargasso Sea. Relieved of the croaking of old Bill over the presence of bubonic rats on board or smallpox germs we now pried into sea chests and cabin lockers and took therefrom much-needed attire to replace the soiled and tattered garments that we had worn for weeks and quickly shaved with borrowed razors, transforming ourselves speedily into natty French officers.

We even affected a jargon that we believed to be near-Parisian French, pronouncing the words as they were spelled but really learning considerable of the written language. By means of this practise we managed to decipher the instructions printed on a card on the condenser and Stunsell set the aparatus functioning just as our supply of water threatened to fail. A few days afterward the old salt singlehanded achieved an even greater feat in conquering the ice-machine, thereby producing several hundred pounds of ice daily as well as creating a cool resort that was like an oasis in the desert.

"Blast my eyes, I never had no chanct before," he asserted, throwing out his chest. "Why, like as not, I'd 'a' been a Edison or a Ford if I'd only started early enough! Oui! Oui! But you lemme alone. If we ever git to port and I collect my share of the salvage on the *Bone Amy*, you'll see Telescope Bill a-sailing in as dandy a airioplane as money kin buy. Mon dew! I'll show them Tuckahoe hicks a few things, be-lieve me! Dunno if may not have ter go to gay Paree to git the right machine. These here French engines surely have the style and finish!"

"There's an almighty big "if" tacked on to that proposition." objected Kellogg, gloomily. "An aeroplane that would seat three poor mutts would be the biggest noise on earth right now."

Stunsell made no reply, having sunk into a deep abstraction and, catching a queer glint in his eye, a sudden thought came telepathically to me:

"Say what's the matter with breaking into that big case under the forward hatch? Who knows if it hasn't got an aeroplane inside?" I asked, eagerly. "It's big enough to hold a locomotive!"

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Stunsell stared at me in amazement.

"Danged if I wasn't just a-goin' ter say that very thing!" he exclaimed, jumping up. "Peel off them dude uniforms, boys, and let's tackle the job now."

It was an enormous packing-box, thirty feet long and reached from port to starboard of the *Bon Ami*, effectually blocking all exploration beyond but its vast bulk had deterred us from the arduous toil of breaking into it merely to satisfy our curiosity. We attacked it now with axes and crowbars, moved by another motive and in spite of the heat and the solidity of its construction, an hour later its contents were exposed to our disappointed eyes. Peter Pan was the only one of the four workers who did not utter a profane expression of disgust when, on tearing away an inner lining of heavy paper, a motor boat, glistening with varnish and paint, was revealed.

"Of all superfluous things" I groaned. "This is the limit!"

"Jest like givin' a pair o' rollin skates to a no-legged man! Mon dew!" drawled Stunsell, spitting explosively. "That's 'bout as welcome as a fur overcoat, ter me."

Under other circumstances we would have gloated over the graceful lines and superb finish of this exquisite launch, but, perfect as she was, none of us felt any emotion other than deep disappointment. We dropped our tools like striking carpenters and marched in single file to the deck where, as usual of late in moments of depression, old Bill began to extract noises of a disheartening nature from an ancient medieval flute and Peter Pan, as was his habit, accompanied him on a mandolin.

The performance never failed to alter our mood; it would have compelled a pall-bearer to laugh and a musician to commit suicide but as none of us had a keen ear for music it merely cheered us, instead of adding to our misery. Invariably, after a soirée of this description, Bill never failed to serve a meal of more than usual seductiveness as an antidote and we sat down that noon to canned shad roe, asparagus, truffles and Bar le Duc jelly with cream cheese, a wonderful feast for castaway drummers.

Peter Pan waited on the table; he had learned to perform this service with exceptional grace but with one objectionable feature—he could not refrain from tasting every dish on the way from the galley to the cabin and if interfered with by angry shouts or a lump of coal by old Bill, he was apt to drop the dish—hence he was not permitted to serve the claret.

We made it a point to converse solely in French at our meals and both Norman and myself would probably have become in time adepts at the language but Stunsell was really hopeless. Having known a French chef at the May's Landing Hotel, he thought it essential to gesticulate with every word and make the most horrible grimaces, hence his efforts were mere caricatures of the lingual elegance at which we aimed.

I have omitted to state that for two weeks we flew astern what we supposed to be the French flag, extracting it from a large chest filled with ensigns but accidentally coming upon a signal book, we discovered that it was the gonfalon of Montenegro. After we had hastily repaired the error and were gazing with pride upon the genuine banner of the republic, Stunsell remarked:

"Tain't sich a big mistake, anyhow. If ya turn this rag sideways it's all the same! But I'm glad nobody caught me a-sailing under no nigger flag, at that!"

V

"WHAT do you suppose has bitten old Bill now?" I asked Norman, one sweltering afternoon. "He seems to be in a sort of perpetual trance, gazing aloft by the hour!"

"I've doped it out but, on the level, I've been afraid to speak about it," he responded with gravity.

"For Heaven's sake! You don't think he's going dippy, do you?" I demanded anxiously.

"I'm willing to admit that Stunsell has a good deal of mechanical ability, understand, and at the same time, I want to say that I've never run across anybody that was clever with tools or paint-brushes or fiddles that wasn't some sort of nut," he explained, with a certain asperity. "He's been tinkering at all sorts of jobs and, of course, that would give a chap a kind of knowledge of general principles but his head is so swelled that he thinks he's a Heaven-inspired genius. I'm glad he is in a trance most of the time because, before that, whenever you were below getting all

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smelled up with the animals I had to listen to his ravings. Now that he's got a new twist he doesn't say much but when he does it's all about rheostabits, ooms, whats and hampers! He makes me tired!"

"But what is the new wrinkle?" I asked.

"It is to laugh!" he snorted and did roar heartily. "He's got himself thinking that he can make the dinky wireless work and send out a call for help, ha! ha! ho! He hasn't stopped to think that he doesn't know how to spell anything but the English language and how in thunder could he send out English calls on a French wireless? Ha! ha! I asked him if he knew what S. O. S. meant and, right off the reel, he says, 'souse'! Can you beat that?"

"Even if he managed to send out a call the poor old goof couldn't give the position of the ship! Let's go and try to knock that into his bean!" I suggested.

It took us some time to convince old Bill of the radical weakness of his aspirations but we were practical men and we finally showed him that for the two reasons mentioned it would be impossible to communicate with any ship in such wise as to induce it to seek for us, and it was manifestly ridiculous, even if he succeeded in sending a message in French, to expect any ship receiving it to go searching the Sargasso Sea.

To reveal to a friend his weakness and, on top of that to make him ridiculous, is nearly always unnecessarily cruel but we had the best reason in the world, that of self-preservation, for our action. It was plain enough, from certain indications, that if Telescope Bill became much more conceited and pretentious, we would be obliged to do our own cooking for we could not depend on Peter Pan. The only thing I could cook was an egg and we had no eggs; Norman claimed to be the premier scrapple fryer in Pennsylvania and there you are! So we were obliged to cut Bill's comb, as the saying is, and cut it deep.

His mortification and subsequent humility were actually pitiful—it was plain that he had founded great hopes upon his mastery of the wireless apparatus—and for days he sat away up in the bow alone with his flute, for even Peter Pan, unable to endure the noises Bill made, had joined us in the chart-room where Norman and I were learning geography in French. This came about, I may explain, through our startling discovery that other nations have other names for towns, rivers and seas than those that are printed on American maps.

A prolonged study of these charts and of the ocean currents thereon depicted had given us a faint hope that we might possibly miss the Sargasso Sea and drift into the region of the trade-winds, otherwise it was certain that we were doomed to become three Rip Van Winkles of the Atlantic. Already I could perceive the end; the supply of meat for my beloved carnivora was visibly lessening although there was plenty for the other animals and a few months at the most in the Sargasso would see us at the end of our resources unless we discovered a species of edible seaweed.

One afternoon, as we were gloomily discussing our prospects, Stunsell came slouching in to say, in a casual manner, that we were passing the all-firedest patch of seaweed he had ever seen. We dashed out in dismayed eagerness to behold several acres of moss-like verdure stretching away to the west.

"There's enough seaweed there," commented Bill, "to pervide coverin' fer clambakes fer two hunderd years!"

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, aghast. "We are lost now!"

Far to the south I thought I saw another and vaster patch of bright green. I reeled to a bench beside the companionway grating and sank upon it, utterly prostrated by this final affliction.

"Ya bin a-talkin' so much 'bout this here Sargassio Sea lately that ya kinder set me a-thinkin' o' gasoline!" said Stunsell, somewhat in his old manner. "It stands ter reason that we jest can't afford ter drift any furder into this mess of spinach of which yonder bunch is a free sample."

"You think we'd better beat it right out of here?" snarled Kellogg, savagely.

"Sorter, that is, soon as possible."

"I suppose you're contemplating freezing the ocean and skating back home!" sneered Norman.

"I ain't a-contemplatin' sitting here like a imitation of a razor clam," drawled Bill. "If ya had the backbone of a jelly-fish, instead o' mockin' and mortifyin' a feller human because he has some natural mechanical genius, you'd be a-hitting it up outa here at, say, ten miles an hour."

"He'll be whistling for a newsboy or a taxi in a minute! I knew the heat would get him before long!" jeered Kellogg.

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"Shut up, you stuffed olive, and let him tell us what's on his mind!" I shouted. "What's the idea, Stunsell?"

"Mebbe it ain't much after all," stammered the old salt. "Only to h'ist that there power-boat overboard, fill her tank with gasoline and tow this here bark outa this windless belt. I figure 'twouldn't take more'n a week. She's one o' them Oklahoma surf boats, with a self-bailin' cockpit and oughter make 'bout eighteen miles an hour with that twenty-hoss-power enjine. I was a-snoopin' 'round and I discovered that the box was marked in the fust place, 'Otto Schmeltzer and Co. Paris, Kentucky,' and then, 'Return to J. P. Morgan and Co. New York,' so I jedge that she's bein' returned as opened by mistake, hey? Guess them Frenchmen thought she was a German boat."

"Great Scott!" I shouted, leaping up. "Why didn't you tell us about this before?"

"Well, ye've been so danged ornery and pernickety lately, both of ye, that I ain't had no heart ter discuss such matters with anybody but I got the boat all ready ter be h'isted overboard when we git the hatch off——"

"Have we got any gasoline?" I asked.

"Reckon there's nine or ten drums aboard. Dunno how much gas them Oklahoma enjines use per hour but I figure there's enough."

Animated by a mingling of resentment at his sensitiveness and admiration for his resourcefulness I surveyed Bill from head to foot and it suddenly struck me that the man had changed. Even his fringe of sunburned whiskers had been transformed by degrees into a Van Dyke beard; his paunch had shrunk away and his chest had swelled. I realized with a swift flash of appreciation that had he stuck a stained-glass monocle in his bad eye he might easily have been taken for a British officer from station in the Punjab.

"For the love of Mike!" I exclaimed in amazement.

The red-necked, wrinkled, seashore bummer, the amphibious hanger-on of Summer hotels, the aged fraud with the alcoholic atmosphere, the useless telescope and the weird tales of shipwreck and piracy, had somehow acquired the manner and appearance of the solver of problems and the doer of difficult things and possessed, withal, a sort of high brow air that defies description, but which was self-evident. It was doubtless, as we figured it out, the result of intimate association with two connoisseurs, dainty food and fine clarets.

I now know that it was the development of a naturally mechanical mind under stress of necessity and opportunity. I discovered after a long time that I had, by daily contact with the lion and the tiger, gained a rather fierce demeanor, unlimited courage, a keen sense of hearing and an appetite for meat, not to mention a perceptible odor, and I can see why Stunsell improved in mind and appearance during our many weeks' sojourn on the *Bon Ami*.

"HOW old are you, Bill?" I asked as we went below to examine the power-boat. I had never thought to ask his age hitherto but somehow it seemed essential as I followed behind the broad, sinewy back, every muscle moving under the thin French gauze undershirt he wore.

"Who, me? Why, I'm forty-four last Wednesday," he replied. "Didn't know ya had a birthday aboard, did ya? Well, I celebrated it all by my lonesome and it took three quarts of that there View Clickot champagne to make me feel young and chirpy! But that's the stuff ter make old bones frisky agin! Me and Peter—he's stuck on the bubbly juice all right, that monk—we turkey-trotted till the bears got dizzy! Wee! Wee! He's a —— ungrateful cuss though. When I was a-weepin' because them Huns is bumbardin' Reems, where they make the best grape-juice tonic, that anthropoid ape tried ter brain me with a bottle, but after I chased him inter the maintop them bears came and licked my tears away. Honest ter gosh, they did! Jest fer that I opened a bottle fer them. After that I don't exakly recall further partic'lars."

"Why, you're a fraud all through," I gasped. "I always thought you were somewhere about seventy!"

"Well, a venerable air is a good asset in my business. I mean in my aforetime business. Course, I've quit that. Ya can't claim ter have a extensive experience in marine matters 'thout ya have some age ter back ya. It wouldn't go with them Summer boarders," he chuckled. "I reckon I did look purty senile and they was days when I sure felt that way. Mon dew! How I uster fight with old man Rambo

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bout the battle o' Gettysburg! He thought. I was a veteran and one time he offered ter git me a job as a guide on the battle-field. He 'lowed I remembered the details of the battle better'n he did, haw! haw! and all I knew was what I got from his talk! Wee! Wee! Allentown's the nearest I ever got to Gettysburg."

We found that the expression "gittin' the hatch off" as used by Stunsell meant the removal of the entire deck between the forecastle and the forward deck-house. We first took off a flooring of planks held by iron bars, under which was a stretch of canvas. Then came a layer of heavy wooden blocks set into deep T-shaped iron trusses.

"Cæsar's ghost! I suppose we'll find two feet of concrete under this!" groaned Norman. "I hope we haven't got to put all this junk back again?"

"We sure have, jest as soon as we git the boat overboard," declared Bill. "Ya kin plainly see, by the pervision made here, that right on this spot is where considerable wetness is expected ter come aboard. We'll have ter work ternight, too, fer we're gittin' nearer to that Sargassio Sea. I kin smell the seaweed!"

Within an hour we had the ship's side open and the tackle arranged and we knocked off for supper. Later, lighted by a full moon above and electric lights below, we slowly hoisted the handsome launch aloft and then lowered her to the surface of the water where she rested like a duck. Then we hoisted all the gasoline drums to the main deck and while Bill filled the tank of the surf-boat with a hose we labored at replacing the hatch-coverings.

It was then we sought repose, after the most toilsome day that we could count in our experience since we so hurriedly built the raft. But we could scarcely sleep, so eager were we to hear the "put-put" of the shining engine shattering the hideous, depressing silence of that awful ocean void.

The morning chorus of the parrots, unnoticed, usually, aroused me and rumbling through the shrill bird-voices I heard that of Stunsell in genuine profanity, indicating an extraordinary irritation. Instantly apprehending some dire disaster to the precious launch, I dressed hastily and hurried on deck but Bill had vanished. Norman, still in his pajamas, was standing with a red book in his hand and a bewildered expression upon his face and as I emerged he said:

"I heard the captain letting off steam and I thought something was wrong but as soon as I picked up this book, which he dropped, I saw that he'd had some of his slats loosened. I don't think he turned in at all last night but sat up studying this book and got a brainstorm. Read that paragraph, right there."

I took the book, which was entitled, "How to run an Oklahoma engine" and read:

FAILURE TO START an engine, if it is properly installed and wired, is most likely to be lack of good spark (See Spark, p. 21), wrong mixture of gas and air, (See Mixture, p. 88) or poor compression. (See also, 18, 47, 34, 23, 79.) It means that something is not just right. The safest way is to look for trouble systematically. (See Propeller, p. 97; see Shaft Coupling p. 34; see Reverse Gear, p. 11; see Wiring, p. 56; see Batteries, pp. 56, 45 and 32; as well as other troubles.) See that Vibrator is working; (see Corrosion, Pitting; p. 76.) Inspect Vibrator terminals on coils. If adjusting-screw has no ratchet, make one. Examine platinum in vibrator. If all other parts are correct and batteries are new, take out spark plugs and widen points. If a good spark is found at coil and a weak one at secondary wire, Points need adjusting. Or the plug is short-circuited. Time may be saved by priming.

"Holy Smoke!" I faltered. "And that's all that may be keeping an engine from starting! No wonder Bill went off his base!"

"And there's ninety-six pages of that stuff! If he read that all night his poor old brain must feel like a cream-puff," declared Norman. "Here he comes now. Don't kid him."

Stunsell came, roaring like a bull:

"Look what we've crawled inter! Gol bing! We'd orter have beat it outa here last night while we had a chanst!"

We stared about us to find the bark surrounded by a limitless stretch of seaweed undulating gently on the ocean swell. I turned to Bill and asked:

"Is that what you were bellowing about? I guess we'll soon pull out of that, won't we?"

"It's 'bout a fathom deep and tougher than rubber! We gotter jump in mighty sudden afore we git in any furder into this mess," he roared angrily. "Stand by ter haul that boat forward!"

With infinite labor we warped the power-boat up under the bowsprit while Bill pushed and cut away the seaweed. He then made fast the towing-line and addressed himself to the engine. We watched him

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eagerly, as well as with some dubeity. He turned the wheel two or three times and scratched his head, set the needle-valve forward and retarded the spark and a loud report at the stern followed.

"Wait a minute, Bill!" shouted Kellogg, grinning. "I'll bring you the book!"

"Huh!" grunted Bill, "If I hadn't set up like a fool last night a-readin' that book ter see if this here Oklahoma is any diffrunt from any other enjine I'd 'a' seen all that seaweed pilin' up on us! You jest wait till I turn on the gasoline and see me skoot!"

He fumbled with the cock of the gasoline pipe and then threw the wheel over. The roar that followed was echoed by wild yells from Norman and myself but Stunsell with a quiet grin reached for the clutch, saying—

"Didn't even have ter prime her, by golly!"

As the rope tautened we felt, with indescribable glee, the *Bon Ami* move forward. But our labor had only begun. The gnarled snaky roots of seaweed, woven and matted by the waters into almost solid masses in spots, wound a ball about the propeller in a few minutes and brought the engine in spite of its protests to a gradual stop. Perspiring and unfed we toiled, tearing away with hooks the clinging vines only to gather them almost instantly again and making no perceptible progress until at noontide we suddenly shot clear of the heavier growth. It took a few minutes to drag the bark free but when beneath her keel and across her shapely bow she felt merely the surface drift of weed, she seemed to leap after us like a racehorse.

Instantly the surly, suspicious antagonism and the brooding bitterness that had been slowly growing in our bosoms flew away across the glittering, steaming waters and in a twinkling we suddenly became ourselves again. When, with what seemed miraculous speed, we had placed the enthralling weeds two miles astern, we stopped the engine and boarded the bark for a celebration that was as unrestrained as our joy. It seemed to us that all our troubles were ended and that we were going home.

VI

ONE of us was always at the wheel of the bark, another in the power-boat and the third busied with various duties here and there, in the days that followed. We soon came to cursing in a new phraseology the slow progress made by the launch with the reluctant bark in tow but none of our measures effected any increase in speed.

We had engine troubles, of course, the peerless Oklahoma being no more exempt from such ills than ordinary motors and with practise and the aid of the Red Book we soon came to know far more about ignition, compression and combustion than old Bill ever dreamed of, yet, somehow, the machine always seemed to recognize him as master. When it sulked or flatly refused to move at all; when, mulish, it tried to go backward, when it backfired with volleys like a machine gun or when it vomited clouds of evil-smelling smoke only Bill could bring it to reason.

He would slide down and after appropriate preliminary remarks with profane frills anent lobscouses and lace-counter clerks with monkey-wrenches he would point out the source of irritation. Bill had a knack with machinery, that is undisputed, and in a minute the obstinate thing would cave in and run like a weasel, and as long as he was in sight, it would continue to run.

It is amazing to me how carelessly motor-makers build these things. When you remove a part, it invariably warps or swells and rebels against going back to its place and if you overlook or forget one tiny detail the whole organization instantly goes on strike. Forget to lubricate it and it squeaks and groans like a boy at the dentist's; lubricate it too generously and it chokes itself. An inventor who can produce a gas-motor that will not have indigestion, asthma, convulsions, pip, heart failure and paralysis every time a man stops watching it for, say an hour or so, will make more money than John D. ever saw.

All this we learned and more as we hummed or roared or rattled through the doldrums. On the twelfth day there came, with the sudden shock of a cold shower, a drift of wind that sent us hustling aboard the *Bon Ami*, delighted with the thought of freedom from the demon motor, but it was only a capful. Two days later there came frisking from the red dawn, a real wind that compelled us thenceforward to tow the Oklahoma astern and clew, belay and haul, all four of us able seamen, from daylight until dark. At night we "snugged down" to a single rag, with one on watch.

Being ludicrously ignorant of all marine

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nomenclature we were obliged to invent names for every sail, halyard and spar in order to act in concert and avoid mishaps. Many of these names were well worth adopting by marine authorities as they conveyed meanings and would enable simple persons to learn seamanship even on a prairie farm if provided with proper diagrams.

We termed the mainsail, "the flapper," the main foresail, "the screen," the poop deck, "the rostrum," the shrouds, "fire escapes" and so on, and after we had partially solved the Chinese puzzle of the braces, stays and halyards, learned their uses and fixed their names in our minds, we really felt that we were masters of the trim vessel. Of course, there were sails, topsails and skysails, of the management of which we remained ignorant. We knew well enough that if we set one of these skyscrapers, as we were tempted to do in a mild breeze, we would never get it down in a fresher wind.

At first soft and variable, the southeast trades heartened and then came strong and straight as we reached away to the northwest under all the sail we dared to carry. It seemed years since we, a pair of flabby drummers, in socks and ties that matched, and a blowsy, mendacious, old and disreputable bar-polisher, had departed from some half-remembered land of tips, newspapers, car-fares, hat-checks, face-powder and dope-fiends.

Then it was "come day, go day, God send Sunday!" as we lied and smiled and bluffed to increase dividends for the U. B. D. Corset Company and the Imperial Typewriter Corp. Lim. Now we were real sailors bringing into port a ship and her cargo worth, without question, two millions, tanned and rugged, ragged and unshaven but free as the dolphins and flying-fish that leaped the waves before our scudding ship. Also, mechanics, linguists, electricians and animal-tamers!

As we grew more adept in the management of the bark and learned to set the sails and brail them for a steady wind the soft, tranquil days speeded along in a pleasant round of sailorly duties and we had time to address ourselves to our personal affairs. Familiar constellations began to wink a welcome to us as we slipped northward through a sea with a perpetual ripple, fringed along the horizon with the ever-present bank of clouds like piles of cream and under a sky as blue as a sapphire. Hours were spent lying flat on our backs dreamily eying the swinging mastheads till we dozed from sheer bliss.

"If I only knew where we were going to strike land," grumbled Norman one night, when for the fiftieth time we had assembled over the chart. "Spike my binnacle! I'd hate to make a monkey of myself when we sight a ship by asking what place this is, like some cheap guy with a flivver on a back road!"

"But you often read about mariners asking the latitude and longitude from others," I declared. "That's nothing to be ashamed of. And remember, the first thing we sight may be a pilot. You know you call a pilot just the same as you would a waiter or a doctor, just hoist the signal, you know——"

"I got that all fixed!" interrupted Stunsell. "What's botherin' me is, s'pose we slam up agin the pesky land in the middle of the night? What'll we do then?"

"Anchor, you big stiff. Or lay off and on until daylight. There's something that once in a while comes into my nut and that is, suppose some sort of Government ship should happen to take a fancy to interfere, custom house cusses or naval men, and getting wise that we are a lot of amateurs, try to take the ship away from us or put a prize crew as they call it, on board to bring her into port?"

"Say, did you ever hear of John Paul Jones or Commodore Perry?" demanded Stunsell, his eye flashing. "Right here's where you'll see how they fit fer home and country if any wall-eyed son of a porpoise tries to take this here bark from William Peck Stunsell! Yessir! This is the first time I ever got my hooks on anything worth fightin' fer and, mon dew! you jest watch me disputin' with anybody that wants a piece of it, 'cept jest us three! We dunno exackly what the law allows us fer salvagin' this bark but my idee is, as I've told ya before, that we git the hull caboodle, seeing as she was deserted."

"Yet the fact that the desertion was a forced one may have a bearing on that matter," suggested Norman.

"We didn't do the forcin', did we?" growled Bill. "All we done was the salvagin' and I stand on that! Yep! And I'm —— glad I learned French, too, fer if any warships come fussin' 'round, I'll parley voo them! Wee! Wee!"

By what inscrutable power we were kept

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from laying and keeping a course that would have eventually terminated in Baffin Bay will never be known, for after deciding upon a bee-line to the northwest from an uncharted position we held to that point from daylight until dark. The log, sextant and sounding-line were, of course, pure mysteries to us and without the charts we would have been in precisely the situation of our daring Viking ancestors who put out into the unknown ocean and kept on going until they sighted land.

VII

THE first ship we saw, passed us miles away and the second, a large steamer, came by at night and her array of electric lights seemed like some gorgeous but unearthly phantasm. The third, flying the Norwegian flag, signaled and passing astern, megaphoned us energetically until out of hearing. Stunsell scratched his head when we informed him of her nationality after consulting the signal book and as she swept away eastward he growled:

"If that Norway herrin' expected us to listen to his blamed Skowegian jabber why didn't he luff and hold up? Mebbe he expected us to put on the reverse gear and back up t' him, hey?"

"Like as not he only wanted to know what the baseball score was," suggested Norman, lightly.

A sudden thought sobered me.

"Holy smoke!" I gasped. "Boys, that fellow was talking French! Suppose he was trying to tell us that he had seen a submarine? He was certainly excited over something!"

"Mon dew! Yer right and he was a-pintin' up ahead yonder as if it wasn't very far away, at that," said Bill, sweeping the northern horizon with anxious eye. "I reckon we're somewheres about where we came aboard this craft, near's a feller could jedge but, gee whiz! no submarine would be a-layin' round here all that time. Don't stand ter reason."

"Say, a U-boat could get home to Germany and back seventeen times since we started," snapped Kellogg, morosely. "I had a hunch that something like this would be pulled on us because things have been going too smooth! Didn't I just say so?"

"Yep, ya was a-hangin' some crape awhile sence, I recollect," responded Bill, slowly. "But I ain't celebratin' no obsequies without no corpse. There ain't no sign o' one o' them things they stick out of the water——"

"Periscope, you mean," I suggested. "I don't believe it's possible to see the infernal things a mile away!"

"Well, I'll tell ya. It's pretty near sundown now and it's a big ocean," he continued. "I propose that we keep a-movin' all night, anyway, s'long as the wind holds like this and by mornin' we'll be a hunderd miles and more away from here."

"What's a hundred miles to a boat that can make twenty or thirty miles an hour?" demanded the gloomy Kellogg. "But I wouldn't be able to sleep, so we might as well adopt that plan."

"Sleep! Strike me dizzy!" boomed Stunsell. "What ya talkin' 'bout snoozin' fer, now? Why, you movin' picter of a shedder crab, we're a-gittin' right inter the war! I never expected ter git nearer to it than the wireless station over at Sayville and here it is a-makin' our flesh crawl and our hair stand up jest as if we was in Yipers or Verdun! But I'm a-wonderin' whether we oughter carry that there French flag any longer. Reckon a submarine wouldn't take any time at all to think afore she let fly at us, hey?"

"I'll haul it down and, Wharton, you go and get that American flag out of the chest!" shouted Norman with sudden energy. "What kind of boneheads are we, anyhow?"

Carrying the main and foresail, we plugged along steadily all night, taking four-hour watches in turn until day broke bringing with the light a change of wind and a choppy sea, with a trail of inky smoke low down on the northwestern horizon. After breakfast I joined Kellogg in the bow with a superb pair of binoculars and together we watched this smoky plume lift and grow until a large black steamer showed clear above the ocean's rim.

"Layin' right smack acrost our bow!" bawled Stunsell, after awhile, a hint of nervousness in his voice, not to mention the least tremor at the weather leaches.

"Yes, old peg, and coming fast!" Norman yelled back.

So swiftly she came that soon we could make out the Dutch colors painted large on her side. With eyes glued to the apertures we were taking note of passengers appearing at the rail to comment, no doubt,

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upon our weather-beaten appearance, and marking, with curious sensations, the presence of bright-colored sweaters and veils that denoted women. Suddenly a bellow from aft startled us. Turning, we beheld Bill frantically pointing ahead.

"Yep! We see the ship, you big boob! It's going to clear us all right!" Kellogg shouted and lifted his glass but I clutched his arm as I caught sight of what had caused Bill's agitation.

Directly ahead at a distance of perhaps a thousand yards there rolled a great greenish object like a whale but with lumps upon its back and a flag drooping from a staff, and as I stared, men appeared upon its dripping body. Then I distinguished the periscope topped by a swaying mass of seaweed that one of the men began to snatch away in desperate haste. Almost instantly an officer emerged, his back to us, his gaze fixed on the approaching steamer.

"Good God! It's a submarine!" muttered Kellogg.

A wisp of pale, thin vapor passed along the U-boat's side and before the sharp, hollow report reached my ears I saw a shell streaking toward the steamer. I lost sight of it almost at once but my eyes followed a second projectile and saw it miss the steamer's bow by several yards. She was then, I guessed, perhaps two miles away.

Before I could withdraw my gaze from her a third shot rang out. She had already begun to veer to port and her vast side was a target that it seemed impossible to miss butt he shell struck the water, ricocheted along the waves and vanished. Kellogg told me that at this moment the officer turned and saw the *Bon Ami* sweeping toward him. With a shout he turned and leaping into the submarine's turret he vanished.

In an instant the green monster began to submerge. As we darted forward, every sail drawing without a wrinkle as the *Bon Ami* heeled slightly over to starboard, we saw the billows turn to foam at her sides, then sweep a glassy green over her greener hull. The men were madly beating at the turret hatch; we heard plainly their shrill cries and curses and in a breath the turret vanished.

The periscope turned its vacuous eye on us as we plunged down upon it and was gone. But ere we could reach the weather rail a ghastly crunching and tearing, followed by a deep, raucous sound resembling a prodigious muffled snore, held us clamped, as it were, to the deck. Twice there came the harsh, metallic rasping along the barnacle-encrusted keel of the bark, then a sharp crash astern and silence.

We ran aft. Stunsell was clutching the wheel with his left hand and waving his cap aloft, his eye blazing. Appalled, stunned and breathless, we stared down upon our swirling wake, over which was spreading swiftly a smear of iridescent, peacock colors. A brownish vapor followed the ship in heavy spirals, wreathing amber curls across the folds of the flag and drifting along the sails for a space as we tore away.

After a silence of several minutes we turned, as if by a common impulse, toward the threatened steamer and beheld her far away and going like a hurricane, evidently not intending to communicate with the *Bon Ami*. As we watched her surely leaving us we regained our self-control, at least mine was restored in a measure, and Bill gripped the wheel with steady hands. It seemed obvious that his act had gone unobserved by the steamer's people and I felt a swift relief in the thought that a knowledge of his fearful deed lay with Norman and myself only.

Yet the benumbing terror of the tragedy, the dizzy plunge into the actuality of War's newest, most gruesome phase and the horrible completeness of the U-boat's destruction still deprived me of the power of cohesive thought, while an added terror was imparted by Stunsell's triumphant, exalted mien. He seemed to have forgotten our existence.

I caught Kellogg's eye and with a stooping gait he started to follow me below, when Bill came to himself with a start.

"You, Wharton, go tackle the for-ard pump and see if we're makin' any water after that thunderin' scrapin', and Kellog, you sashay down and git three bottles o' that gold-tipped extry dry and we'll celebrate!" he commanded sharply.

The man had no more compunctions or fear of the consequences than a musk-ox!

We obeyed his orders automatically. I found the normal amount of water in the well and reported to Bill, who grinned and spat to leeward. It was some time before Norman reappeared with the champagne, his ruddy color partly restored and a certain doggedness in evidence. He placed the

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bottles on the deck and leaning against the binnacle, hoarsely demanded:

"Where do I—and Wharton—get off on this deal, Stunsell? You want to understand, distinctly, right now, that neither of us can be held responsible for this thing. We had nothing to do with it."

Bill stared at him in mingled amazement and contempt, then, shaking his tawny mane like some ancient Viking, he roared:

"No, you're not in the picter, you big stiff. Me and Peter Pan, we're the responsible parties. We done it all by ourselves and if another submarine came along right now and blew us sky high I'd go up a-crowin' like a rooster! Why, you caraway seed, don't ya know that in about two shakes of a mule's foot we'd 'a' had a torpedo in us? 'Merican flag? What do they care 'bout flags? They fire first and then ask questions, you poor fish! Open them bottles and insted o' being a-swimming fer home at this blessed minute, we'll take a bath in joy-juice!"

We required no urging for both of us felt the need of a stimulant and a quarter of an hour later we were able to compare notes.

"I s'pose ya noticed that the Oklahoma was gone?" said Bill, passing an almost empty bottle to Peter Pan. We looked over the stern. A bit of the power-boat's stem-post was cork-screwing behind us at the painter's end.

"I seen her go," Bill explained. "I was scared stiff when I heard that grindin' along our bottom and, says I, the rudder's lost fer sure and I throws her head up the wind. I looks back and see the thing come up slam agin the little old Oklahoma and bust her to kindlin'-wood quicker'n winkin'! I reckon we'll be blamed fer losin' her, hey, when we come ter settle with the shippers? A purty leetle boat. I sure hated ter see her go."

No regrets for the lives he had dashed into Eternity, no thought of the grave international complications his ruthless act might create, nothing but an enormous complacency! When I hinted that he might be called upon to expiate his deadly affront to Germany he grinned as he bit off an enormous chew and replied:

"Oh, I guess our Secretary of State kin easy pass back one of them German notes of apology and regrets saying as how the submarine commander made a mistake and anyhow, the Allies is usin' 'Merican flags, and, besides, we're to blame some because we're sellin' 'em ammunition and they ain't sure it happened, anyway. They's a lot o' them notes in the Secretary's desk, sonny. S'far as we're concerned, it was an accident, all right, fer the danged U-boat was right in our course and a-violatin' international law. Ya kin see, can't ya, that if she'd stopped shootin' and submerged a little sooner old Telescope Bill wouldn't never had a chanst ter say he'd fit in this here world war, by hokum! S'far as that goes I ain't lookin' fer publicity and we don't have ter say a word about it. I'm satisfied if you be!"

VIII

A WIRELESS warning from a ship that had encountered and escaped the U-boat east of Porto Rico had sent a whole fleet of English and French cruisers patroling the West-Indian waters and confined another fleet of merchant vessels to various ports but, fortunately for our peace of mind, we met none of the cruisers. Late in the day of our encounter with the submarine the Dutch steamer wirelessed its home office that it had reasons for believing that an American bark had rammed a submarine as it was shelling the steamer; this turned the cruisers northward at once.

Had we pursued our course these would have overtaken us off Nova Scotia, perhaps, but a hint of chill in the late September nights changed next morning to a frosty, northwester that bade fair to drive us back to the doldrums.

"We've been up agin everything but a head wind and I guess by now we've learned enough 'bout the old gal's ways ter pint her clost enough ter beat it smack inter some part of the United States," declared Bill in council. "—— if I wanter become a second Flyin' Dutchman!"

"Same here," echoed Kellogg. "Anyhow, I'd feel easier if we were inside the three-mile limit. Next thing we'll be bumping into an iceberg, I suppose!"

"Any old harbor would look pretty good to me," I admitted. "Of course, I'd prefer to lay off Tottenville, but I'd risk a port in Mexico or Haiti rather than take chances on getting pneumonia. Poor old Peter Pan is shaking as though he had a congestive chill and you know that monk is worth

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five thousand dollars, if he's worth a cent."

"Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! You ain't figurin' on sellin' a shipmate, are ya? Have a heart!" growled Bill. "You go and dig up some proper warm duds fer him and chuck a snifter o' gin inter him and I'll betcher he'll be as busy as a nigger with a catfish in ten minutes."

We began our west-by-south course with the mainsail and jib; but the northwester wearing out by morning we set the foresails, clewing them up as flat as possible and stole a number of leagues before nightfall when the breeze died away to an oily calm with heavy unseen swells that rolled the bark to her chains. We awoke to find ourselves enveloped in a dense fog.

"This is a real dilemmer;" groaned Stunsell. "Now I'm —— if I know what ter do! I ain't seen a fog like this sence the one in Absecon when it was so thick that weakfish swam right up inter it and Jake Weikel caught 'em with a rod and reel outer an autermobile, by golly! Well, we've got a good excuse fer a genuine old-fashioned breakfast fer a change and ter take our time a-eatin' it. I dunno but what I'd jest as leave be in them there doldrums, after all."

As we were finishing our breakfast, which was the culminating masterpiece of all of Bill's culinary achievements, meals which at all times softened our feelings toward Bill and made us forget that we owed our misfortunes to his duplicity and on this occasion put us on the verge of acknowledging an actual indebtedness to him, he suddenly started, straightened up and with a peculiar expression on his face, said:

"Listen! Dern it! I thought I heard it afore but I s'pose it was that French Vitchy water making my ears hum."

With an intentness that was almost painful we bent our ears to the foggy silence. In a moment there came from the pallid void about us a long drawn, whining wail, faint and eery, so attenuated as to be barely audible, yet, somehow, startling raucous. Bill rose to his feet.

"That there is a fog-horn, sons," he said. "And it ain't no steamer's whistle nor a siren. What's more, unless something's gone wrong with my ears all of a sudden it's the Absecon fog-horn! I heard that blast fer more'n six years when I was a-teachin' school in Port Republic."

We hurried on deck and as we listened to the faraway sound, now louder, now fainter, we peered into the gray pall about us with anxious eyes.

"Of course, it's yonder, in the west," declared Kellogg. "But it sounds louder, now and then, from the north. Couldn't it be a ship?"

"Nope! A ship has ter blow every minute. It's the old Absecon horn, I tell ya," said Bill with conviction.

We paced the deck from rail to rail, as was our habit, not knowing that genuine sailors walk fore and aft and only steamboat men athwart, and four hours dragged on punctuated regularly by louder and louder wails, when the sound ceased.

"Holy Smoke! That means the fog's lifted ashore," bawled Stunsell. "Mebbe it means wind from the west. But by hokum! it's thicker than ever 'bout here. Ya c'd shovel it!"

Another hour passed in anxious watchfulness. It never occurred to one of us that we also were in duty bound to sound fog signals in that ghostly, pale silence; all we did was to stare and strain our ears. Suddenly a brass band began to play! The air was strange and utterly unlike anything we had ever heard, mournful yet lively, and as the band blared it out we recognized it as dance music. It was a Hawaiian melody, entirely in keeping with the oily gurgle of the ocean swell and the melancholy fog.

As it ceased three toots of a locomotive's whistle sounded and a dog barked. Then the fog-horn suddenly resumed its raucous, dismal yawping, overpowering all other sounds, although seemingly far away. As we endeavored to sense its location by ear we felt the bark lift with a new, decided motion and with the creaking of the yards the flapping of the sails and the swish of halyards there came to us the sullen thunder of breakers.

Standing impotent, appalled by the new danger, one with which we were perfectly familiar, both Norman and myself were startled by the sudden appearance of Stunsell from somewhere amidships.

"Well, fellers, it looks ter me as though we'd fetched jest 'bout at the spot we started from!" he bawled. "What's more, we'll know fer certain, fer the fog's a-liftin'."

As he spoke the vapor rose with the steady uplift of a theater's curtain and before our astonished eyes, less than a half-mile away, there spread out the variegated

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panorama of Atlantic City, seen in a queerly translucent atmosphere that, without real sunshine, showed distinctly every café sign, hot-dog stand, salt-water-taffy booth and paste-diamond bazaar on the boardwalk. We even noted in that brief glimpse that women were wearing furs with bathing-suits and then the curtain fell. The fog became denser than before.

"My God! This is awful!" groaned Kellogg, wringing his hands and perspiring ice-water. "We are drifting ashore on one of the most treacherous coasts in the world! We're almost in the breakers now!" His voice trailed away into a cracked falsetto.

"And did ya notice that it was almost high tide? We'll land smack upon the beach now, fer it's plain we've missed Brigantine Shoals, somehow, and the water's deep most up ter the pier, accordin' ter the chart," added Stunsell in a dull, hopeless tone. "Ef we only had the little Oklahoma now!"

Fainter and fainter, the minutes wearing on, came the banshee wail of the fog-horn, The *Bon Ami* was rocking heavily now, the roar of the breakers sounded right abeam and each moment we expected, in breathless suspense, to feel the well-remembered, hair-raising shock of contact with the hard sandy bottom. The fog began to curl and wreathe in fantastic scrolls, to dissolve into aisles and lofty vaults and then we felt a gust of warm wind. For ten seconds it held our foresails aback, flattening them to the masts, then passed.

"Great Scott! A breeze!" I cried.

Stunsell spat on his hand and held it aloft. Before he could voice an opinion the sea about us broke into a roaring foaming caldron and the bark swung sharply around with a sickening lurch as a giant billow seized her. She wallowed like a dead whale what time three such rollers had their will of her, while, petrified with fear and disgust mingled, we clutched the rail powerless to guide or steady her.

I thought with a stab of pain of the unfortunate animals confined below and for an instant contemplated releasing them but while the other creatures might safely be freed, the idea of a lion and a tiger roaming the wilds of New Jersey was too unpleasant to be considered.

While we waited in momentary expectation of the shock of grounding, for it was obvious that we were now almost ashore, the sea calmed as by magic and a great red buoy slid past not five yards to starboard. Open-mouthed, Stunsell stared as it swiftly darted into the fog and then, clutching his beard in perplexity, he yelled:

"That's a channel buoy! Where in —— be we? Th' tide's a-runnin' like a millrace and we're in smooth water agin!"

"And we are going backward, too!" I squealed, utterly bewildered.

Bill rushed madly to the bow and startled into action we followed. For an instant he seemed undecided, then said with grim determination:

"Boys, we gotter take a chanst! I hate ter do it, by golly, but I don't see no other way. We gotter drop this here anchor!"

Aghast, we hesitated but he was already at work and in a moment we were clumsily assisting him, but with beating hearts. The great rusty anchor splashed into the oily sea and seemed to touch bottom instantly. We paid out a few fathoms of cable and then checked the sternward sweep of the *Bon Ami* with a sharp snub. The current was strong and fairly swift and the water gurgled under her grass-grown bow with a menacing, exulting chuckle.

We felt, all three of us, a certain sense of final defeat in thus mooring our prize, even in extremity, for now none of the lucky turns of wind or tide that had so often saved us could avail. Standing impotent, staring at the straining cable, we were but half-conscious of a new sensation; we felt no longer the ocean surge, the masts stood stiffly erect, the creak of swinging tackle ceased and in the weird silence we heard the breakers off to port.

"I'll be tanked if I make head or tail o' this!" mumbled Stunsell. "We're turned clean 'round and we're a-pintin' due east but the surf is off ter east'rd, too, and a blamed long way off at that. Now how'd the beach git over there?"

"It must be an effect produced by the fog," I hazarded. "Of course, the shore is west of us! Let's take a look at the compass."

But that instrument showed that we were pointing out to sea with the beach astern, and a strong current making straight ashore, yet the boom of the surf came plainly from seaward.

Our varied experience totally failed to

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provide any explanation of these confusing conditions, still less any method of procedure, thus our ignorance increased the sense of unknown dangers curtained by the fog and a dull, inert terror took possession of us. We spoke in whispers. Every time Bill spat overboard the resulting splash made me start nervously and stopped my heart's beating.

THE still air grew warmer as the midday sun tinged the mist a lemon yellow but none of us dared to leave his post for a moment. The awful strain, rendered almost intolerable by the serenity of sea and sky, had at last reduced me to a condition bordering on nervous prostration with all my faculties, except that of hearing, half benumbed. Hence, when suddenly a bell tinkled sharply, seemingly on board of the bark, unmistakably a telephone bell, its peremptory summons fell upon a mind dulled to inanition.

It pealed forth again. Bill's jaw fell and his eye glazed like that of a dying cod. Then out of the void came the cheery voice of a woman with a German accent, oily and yet shrill;

"Hello!" it cooed. "Oh, good mornin', Mrs. Markburg!—Yes. Oh, fine!—Vot? Oh, no! Not! Dot iss der von you buttonhole on der linen mit crochet cotton—yes, on der nine row shoost der same! Dree! turn two open, dree turn, slip back to fourt, chain dree, vun trevle, two open turn, see?—Oh, not at all!—Vot?—Der sloop? No, it is not came, Chake says it can't get here mit such a fog.—*Vot!* You see it? Oh, Mrs. Markburg! Mit a monkey in der tops! Vait!"

There was a pause, during which we could hear our perspiration drip upon the deck, then, startlingly clear:

"Chake! Chake! Right avay go find Cap'en Hand and tell him der sloop iss here. Mrs. Markburg seen its mast ofer der fog once."

Another silence, then in lower tones—

"Ach! She's rung off!"

"Hit me a wallop on the bean with a belaying-pin, Wharton. I'm hearing things!" said Kellogg in a cracked, thin tone.

Before I found breath the voice rang out again, in song:

"Ain't dot a shame, a measly shame? To keep my huspand the rain out in!—Oh! Lena!—Carl! Here's der sloop mit a monkey on top of the mast! Come upstairs kvick!"

Peter Pan's low-toned chattering became audible from the masthead. We could discern him plainly and it was quite obvious that something was visible to the simian that was exciting him greatly. Clinging to the very tip of the topmast with one hand and foot he began a series of idiotic antics, accompanied by insane gibberings, the only thing needed to complete our demoralization.

The ringing laughter of delighted children cracked the welkin, as it were, paralyzing Peter Pan with its novelty, he having mistaken the children for fellow chimpanzees, and causing him to slide down the topmast precipitately. Bill started for the shrouds but as his foot touched the ratlines he, also, seemed to receive an electric shock. With wide open eyes and mouth he stood there staring like a hick at an aeroplane until Kellogg twitched at his trousers and irritably demanded—

"What d'ye see? For the love of Mike, shoot!"

"Why, dang my battens! This here fog is a-meltin' like ice-cream on a griddle," mumbled Bill. "Here we are right up agin' a house and behind it is a hill and atop o' that is what looks ter me reasonably like a saloon! But 'tain't Atlantic City, fellers, it looks kinder homelike and respectable."

We made to join him on his elevated perch but ere we moved the fog vanished as if brushed away, revealing a picture so unexpected and so attractive that it put the finishing touch to our bewilderment. Instead of a perilous, treacherous beach to leeward with its heartless boardwalkers crowding to witness our destruction, we beheld, only half a cable-length from the *Bon Ami's* stern, a straggling wharf artistically encrusted with barnacles.

On this stood a nondescript edifice from a window of which a woman and two children gazed at us in astonishment. High enough to be a conspicuous landmark, behind this structure rose a hill crowned with a cluster of dwellings gleaming amid the greenest foliage, a sight to make a real estate agent's mouth water. To the eastward a wide expanse of smooth water and marshy islands ended in a dim horizon line of seaside hotels and bungalows. We were not on the ocean and there was no surf within perhaps two miles.

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Bill gasped and sliding to the deck hastened below. The foxy old reprobate had already discerned a squat figure approaching down the red clay gully called the Wharf Road with a gait combining official dignity with unseemly curiosity. It wore navy blue attire, with here and there a brass button glinting dully. It scrambled into a rowboat and we glimpsed a mass of whiskers that, by half a peck, at least surpassed those which Bill had used in his nefarious trade. Sculling adroitly it reached our side just as Bill, resplendent in the best uniform the *Bon Ami's* collection afforded, reappeared on deck.

"What ship is this?" bawled our visitor, shading his eyes as he surveyed our shabbiness. A face as crimson as a tomato flamed out from the jungle of hair and two bead-like black eyes bored into us. "Where ye from and how the —— did ye git here in that fog?" He worked around under our stern and read the bark's name. His face betrayed his surprise.

"This is the *Bone Amy*, of Lyons, France, Captain Bill Stunsell, Master," announced Bill with an air. "Who the —— air you, neighbor?"

"Jesse M. Hand, Collector of the Port of Somer's Point," responded the little fat man. "If you'll let down your landin' ladder I'll come aboard."

"Holy smoke!" muttered Stunsell. "Here boys, let's git this here contraption down. We've lit on a regular, honest-ter-gosh port and our troubles are ended! My snakes! Somer's Point and I never knowed it!"

When we had clumsily lowered the landing stage Mr. Hand boarded us with alacrity and cast a comprehensive and astonished glance over the apparently disordered deck, not knowing that what he beheld was merely the labor-saving contrivances of three clever landsmen. Peter Pan and the Thibet bears, with a group of scarlet ibises were huddled amidships, the wart hog rescuppers and a row of cockatoos perched posed lazily on a coil of rope in the lee along the cabin skylights, preening in the sun.

"Glad to meet ya, chief," saluted Bill as he shook hands with the Collector. "If you'll step down inter the cabin we'll tell ya how we come ter select your port ter finish what we kinder think is some considerable voyage."

WHEN Mr. Hand was seated in the cabin at a table ornamented with an array of strange bottles that made his eyes pop, Bill said:

"We ain't got any papers ter show ya, Mister Collector, fer the simple reason that we never laid eyes on none ourselves, so ye'll have ter take our affidavys, I reckon, ter git started off right."

Bill then went on to relate the amazing tale of our adventure. As he got warmed up to his old time enthusiasm, he forgot himself and before we realized it, had confessed to ramming the U-boat. But before this happened the Collector had begun to reveal a fidgetiness and an impatiencet hat he could scarcely restrain and it was with difficulty that he could keep his seat until Stunsell had finished his recital. Then he leaped up and started for the companionway but Bill grabbed him.

"Hold on! There's more of it, chief! We gotter make a full statement!"

"Full statement! —— and hemlock! Say, cap, this is a front page with pictures! I gotta git to the telegraph office and then hustle as I haven't hustled in twenty years. I'm the editor of the *Somer's Point Beacon* and the local correspondent of the *New York American* and the *Philadelphia Press*. Holy smoke! Nothing like this has busted loose in my bailiwick since I— Gee! I've gotta git a photographer, too! I'll suspend the Port Collector's functions for two or three hours! My! My! There'll be two thousand reporters, artists and movie men here tomorrow!"

Too stunned for a more effective protest, I squeaked:

"Hang on to him, Bill! We can't afford to let this get into the papers!"

Hand turned to me in a sort of ecstatic fury.

"Why you poor boob, where are you from? Do you s'pose you could come into any port and keep this story canned?" he asked.

"I—I mean that part about the submarine," I stammered. "We don't want that published, you know."

"Yah! Jesso!" he snorted contemptuously. "Of course not! Just when Germany has sunk four American ships and the whole —— country is wild for revenge, you'd simply bottle up this soul-satisfying, oh-be-joyful epic poem, hey? Why, when any harbor official gave that bent stempost of

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yours the once over you'd have to uncork! Don't you know this'll be an international matter? That you'll have a run-in with the State Department, the German Ambassador, the Governor of New Jersey and the Sheriff of Atlantic County, probably?"

"Not me!" grunted Bill. "I'll take ter the scrub-oaks first!"

"Nix on that! You stay right here and grab the moving-picture rights! Soak 'em good and plenty, too, for you'll be the biggest noise, for a few days, in the whole United States, yes, and Europe and points west."

And, believe me, he was!

How that old villain hogged the limelight, bagged the publicity and copped the adulation would merely stir me up again to relate in detail. We played second fiddle to him, took his dust from the first gathering of the newspaper horde, through the motion picture parade, to the grand finale at the White House, where he had to tell the story to the President, thus getting into the papers again when the matter had almost been forgotten. Months later, Hand got out a book about the affair in which we figured as also-rans, and when the city council of Tuckahoe, in a Winter session, voted Bill a gold medal costing three hundred dollars, we never got even a diploma.

Of course, in a material way Kellogg and I profited equally with Bill. We shared alike in the salvage, which came to over three millions, not to mention the sum he exorted from the motion-picture people, a fortune in itself, as well as in the countless invitations to banquets, solicitations of beggars, bankers, bunco-men and autograph fiends and the attentions of life-insurance agents, yet Bill remained, as Hand predicted, the "Big Noise" of the *Bon Ami's* salvers.

This, perhaps, would not have mortified us so much had he remained in his proper place, that of a mere skipper, but with a glass eye, a dress suit and universal approbation the man developed into an after-dinner orator and a national institution. Of course, he was a striking figure in any attire and his ideas were so raw as to seem original to the majority of his hearers but I never could understand how the high-brows fell for his stuff. But they did, in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York, places where they have the real thing in car-load lots.

But after all the international and salvage matters had been settled to the satisfaction of all concerned the severest shock of all came to me. Thrice I had occasion to confer with Mr. Isaac Carbur during these proceedings and on the last occasion had pointedly referred to my suit, inasmuch as my standing was now beyond cavil, but he had rather gruffly told me to call at his home at three the next afternoon about that matter and returned to the subject under discussion.

This, however, did not disconcert me, as Alice and I had practically decided to take affairs into our own hands and I kept the appointment, arriving at the Carbur mansion in high spirits but on entering the drawing-room was almost dazed on beholding Telescope Bill holding forth to my fiancée and her parent. An all-embracing chill seized me as the horrid thought leaped to my mind that even here this old impostor was undermining me, but I shook off the idea as utterly ridiculous.

Bill hailed me cheerily, and while I still held Alice's hand, her father entered the room and with a geniality he had never displayed to me before, slapped me on the back and said:

"Son, you're all right. Old Bill endorses you and that goes! Go ahead with your program,—— the expense and send the bills to me."

Alice's sweet tones came like an echo.

"Father insisted that we must wait until Uncle William had given his consent but I knew all along that he'd never refuse, knowing you all those months at sea."

"Uncle William?" I stammered.

"That's me!" boomed Stunsell, lighting a cigar.

"You don't mean to say that you didn't know Bill was her uncle!" gasped Carbur. "Well, he was always a silent, uncommunicative cuss, Bill was. Yes, he married my sister down in Jersey and he was a regular guy, all right, whilst she lived, but afterward the call of the sea, as the feller says, was too strong for him and we lost him. Why I never knew he was a sea captain until this U-boat business busted loose."

"Yep, they wanted your credentials and I give 'em," said Stunsell hastily. "I told 'em that a close and long-continued observation of ya had convinced me that ya was a careful but darin' navigator, a stiddy upholder of th' truth and although surrounded

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on all sides with temptations in th' shape o' choice malted, vinous and spirituous beverages, ya didn't touch a drop, no more'n I did myself. I admitted ya couldn't cook fer sour apples but ya could make a royal Bengal tiger lay down and roll over three times and that takes more nerve than assemblin' a lot of junk and callin' yourself the Creator of th' Cuddler Car, or words to that effect."

So we were married and have lived happily up to date. Last February I happened to be on the Indian River and coming ashore at Rockledge, ran upon Bill in a Palm Beach suit and white yachting cap with gold insignia. He greeted me cordially and took me to the yacht club where I discovered that he was its commodore and a reigning monarch. Whereupon he explained:

"Oui! Oui! I've been commodore of this club for a year. They wanted somebody that was distangy. Ever see Kellog nowadays? No? That's very strange. Know he went broke, I s'pose? Yep, he did. Got caught overnight with a whole orphan asylum full of war babies but he's all to th' mustard now. I lent him fifty thousand and he put over that shipwreck scheme o' his last season and made a pile. Understood he was a-goin' to plant one at every seashore resort from Bar Harbor to Miami but I've been too busy to go down there and see. I've got a contract to make three hundred submarines for the Government."

And there you are.

JUST A HOUND

by ED. L. CARSON

What's the matter with you? Ain't I feedin' you right?
Then why in blazes didn't you fight
And chaw up that cur like you knew you could?
Not have them all holler, "Your dog's no good,"
And three of them spoutin' their low-down wit
Till I had to thrash them before they'd quit.
There was one of us two that would fight, they found,
But it was not you, you ornery hound.

Say, stop! Don't roll up your eyes that way—
They look just the same as they did the day
I met up with the bear, with an empty gun,
And she clawed you so bad, for you would not run
But jumped for her throat and got in her road
And gave me a chance to slip in a load,
And you looked up so queer when your cuts I bound,
You'd have died for me then, you old fool hound.

I know what you're trying to tell me now,
"There's no darned sense in a bar-room row,
For you only waller around in dirt
And the rest all laugh to see you get hurt;
To be able to do it is just as well,
But don't scrap till you've gotta, then scrap like h———
Which is some good motto to pack around——"
Aw, come here! Let's be friends, you're a good old hound.

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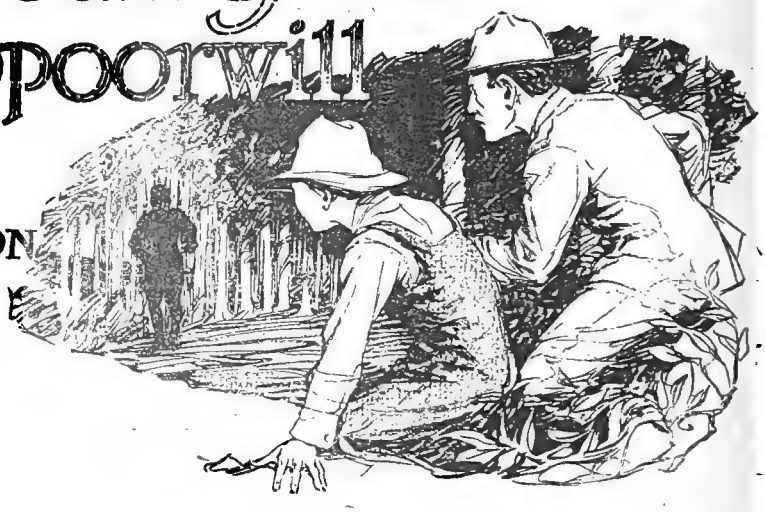
The Call of the Whippoorwill

by

EDWIN C. DICKENSON



Author of "The Will to Die"

THE captain and the second lieutenant were over a topographical map.

"The country stands on edge," said the older officer, pointing to the closely-lined contours, "and is thickly wooded. You will have a deuce of a time going through it at night and you may lose a man or two but we must have the information."

The young lieutenant nodded seriously, visualizing the path of the wood-road winding among the charted hills.

"I have sent for a guide," continued the captain, "but the men are all in the army and you will be lucky if I find a boy."

"The enemy is reported east of the lake, here?" asked the lieutenant, his forefinger on the spot of blue.

"The secret service reports a squadron of cavalry somewhere in there and it is for you to learn where. Take the first squad. You had better hide your horses at the foot of Hill 480 and go over it afoot."

The captain's orderly entered at this moment.

"What is it Haynes?" asked the captain.

"Boy outside, sir. Says he has some information for the captain."

"Bring him in."

It was a slight youth who entered the tent. He wore blue overalls that were too large for him and a slouch hat that sat so low on his forehead as almost to conceal his eyes.

The captain gave him a keen glance of appraisal. Most of the countryside boys would have removed their hats at such a time and most of them shown some sign of embarrassment, but this lad stood quietly waiting for the captain to speak, his dark eyes shining under the brim of his hat.

"Well, lad," said the officer at last, "so you have come to help us out?"

He started to push his cigaret-case across the table to the boy and reconsidered it. The boy seemed too young to encourage in bad habits.

"Yes," came the low answer.

"You live about here?"

"Yes. All of my life."

"That's good," said the captain heartily. "Now, what is the news you have for me?"

It seemed to the watching lieutenant that the boy whitened. He moistened his lips and shifted from one foot to the other.

"I know where you can capture one of the enemy," he faltered.

The captain's glance grew shrewd.

"Where?" he demanded bluntly.

"I can't tell you. I can lead you there."

"Humph. Is he there now?"

"No."

"Then how do you know he will be?"

Now the boy reddened.

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"He is to meet me there."

The captain helped himself to a cigaret and lighted it before he spoke again.

The lieutenant felt strangely disappointed. Information of this character is always acceptable but no one thinks any more of the informant for it.

"A spy, eh?" the captain shot at the boy, his gray eyes holding him remorselessly.

"Yes."

The captain turned to his map.

"You know where the lake is, of course?"

"Yes."

The officer placed a forefinger on the round blue spot.

"There it is on the map."

He traced a forefinger along the black line at its head.

"Do you know this road?"

"Yes. That is the Cross-over Road."

"And this?" pointing to one at the other end of the lake.

"We call that the Easton Pike."

"Good. Now where is your man?"

The lad put his finger on the hill half-way between the two roads and to the east of the lake.

"About there. But you never can find the spot unless I lead you there."

Speculatively the captain considered the youth. He was so young that his voice had not changed, yet it was apparent that he was intelligent.

"How does it happen that you are to meet him there?" he asked.

"I can't tell you that," answered the boy, lowering his eyes.

The captain was silent for a moment.

"How am I to know that you will not lead my men into a trap?" he queried.

The lad stiffened at this.

"If you do not believe me you need not go," he answered.

The captain laughed.

"That is fair enough, lad," he said, "and I believe you. There is your guide, lieutenant," he said in dismissal.

"This place is right in your path. Pick up this fellow if you can and if you can't follow out your other instructions."

TEN minutes later the lieutenant left camp with his detail in column of twos. At the head the young guide rode beside the officer on a troop horse. Night was falling. The hills loomed formidably before them. But they held nothing of fear for the young lieutenant. Up there somewhere was the biggest kind of big game and the cleverest man, and he was the hunter.

He took his map from the pocket of his blouse and glanced over it in the fading light.

"First left, first left again, then the first right at the fork and follow it around the head of the lake. Is that right, son?"

"Yes," was the prompt answer.

"Humph, you don't believe in wasting words do you?" he commented.

He gave the signal to increase the pace and the little command broke into a smart trot and kept it up until the road mounted steeply into the hills. Here the lieutenant cautioned his men against smoking and talking and rode forward with his youthful guide as the point of his patrol.

It was quite dark now. The lieutenant could hardly see the slight figure beside him in the shade of the forest on either side of the road. There was no sound other than the shuffle of the horses' feet in the soft road, and the creak of leather.

When they had mounted well into the hills the guide rode close to the lieutenant and spoke in a whisper.

"There is an opening in the stone wall a little farther on," he said tensely. "We cross a clearing and drop down into a hollow where there is an old apple-orchard. We can leave the horses there."

"Lead on and we will follow," replied the lieutenant.

A hundred yards farther along, the lad reined in his mount and picked his way through a break in the wall. One by one the troopers followed.

It was rough going into which the guide had led them, pastureland, apparently, where boulders vied with woodchuck-holes to trap the scrambling horses. More than once the lieutenant marveled at the recklessness of the young guide and questioned his own wisdom in allowing himself to be led into such country. They crossed a brook, at last, and felt the soft sward of the old apple-orchard under foot, the gnarled limbs of the apple-trees outlined against the western sky.

Here the guide dismounted. "This is as far as we can go on horse," he whispered.

The lieutenant passed the word back to dismount. Horses were linked together, two men left with them and the others followed the lieutenant and the guide.

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Silently the lad picked his way up the steep hillside. As quietly as they could the cavalrymen followed but more than once the guide stopped and looked back at the crack of a twig or the rattle of a stone down the ledge.

Once they had gained the crest, however, the footing was better. The lieutenant spread his men out in line of skirmishers with orders not to lose touch with their fellows and guide in the center where he would be. In this formation they made their way through the forest for perhaps a mile when the guide cautioned them to stop.

"The Cross-over Road is only a short distance ahead," whispered the youth. "Let your men stay here and come with me."

The lieutenant passed the word to his men to wait for him, loosened his pistol in its holster and followed the guide.

They had not gone a hundred yards when they came upon a small circular clearing in the forest. The guide halted on the edge of it and listened. No sound came to the ears of the lieutenant. The lad knelt then and the officer caught the quick flash of a pocket search-light, saw a small gold wrist-watch on a slender wrist and it was dark again.

"It will be only a few minutes wait," said the guide.

There was a tenseness of nerves suggested in the voice, an emotion that lay deeper than the excitement of such a time. It caught the attention of the young officer and effected him tremendously. He ran over in his mind a dozen minor incidents in connection with the half-hysterical voice and the slender wrist and came at once to a conviction which he now wondered he had not arrived at earlier. His guide was not a lad but a woman!

The discovery exercised the young lieutenant more, doubtless, than would have that of the presence of the enemy.

The night was starless, the tall trees speared ghostlike into the heavens, the haunting scent of the dew on the forest flowers came to his nostrils, the call of the night insects, all unconcerned at the presence of intruders seemed doubly loud to his listening ears, and beside him crouched not one of his own sex but that mysterious thing, a woman!

Why had she volunteered her services? Why had she been willing to lead these rough troopers through the forest at night? Was it a trap and if it was not why was she so anxious that this soldier of the enemy whom she was about to betray should be captured?

A clear-cut call of the whippoorwill added its sad music to the other sounds of the forest. The lieutenant started, for from the girl beside him came a marvelous echo of the call. Had he not seen from whence came the sonnd surely he would have believed it the night-bird itself.

He bent to whisper to the strange guide. A small hand was laid on his arm to check him as an answering call came from across the clearing. And now he saw a dark form appear in the open, hesitate a moment and steal swiftly toward them. He drew his pistol from its holster.

A dozen feet away the visitor halted, listening in every expression. A minute went by, a minute of tense silence.

"Where are you, Aline?"

The lieutenant's heart pounded under the khaki. From beside him came again the call of the whippoorwill, softened to a mere whisper.

Joyously the man came forward now.

"You darling," he breathed.

Passive the girl crouched beside the lieutenant. No word of warning she spoke as the newcomer parted the branches. The lieutenant loathed her for a traitress as he brought the butt of his pistol down and dropped her lover in a silent heap.

AN HOUR later the lieutenant stood again in the captain's tent. Beside him in a camp-chair sat the slight pathetic figure of the guide. Her hat had been lost and her masses of dark hair were crowded low on the forehead. Across from her, hands bound behind his back stood a tall young man with a bandage about his head and a trickle of blood down his cheek.

He stood at attention in spite of his injury, his chin was up and his eyes bright yet sad and when they wandered back to the girl they darkened as in pain.

The captain glanced curiously from the girl to the captive and then to the lieutenant in inquiry.

"We found this man where the girl said we would," reported the young officer bluntly. "I sent a trooper on beyond before we turned back and he reported that he found the main camp of the squadron with several hundred horses. I did not question the

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prisoner. In fact," he said apologetically, "I hit him a little harder than I meant to and we had to carry him back to the horses —also the guide," he added anxious that his superior should have all the details. "She fainted."

The captain turned to the captive.

"What is your regiment?" he demanded.

"Can't answer that, sir," came the respectful but steady reply.

"How many men in your command?"

The captive shook his head with a half-smile. It was plain to be seen that he was not to be bullied into disclosures that would hurt the cause of his side.

The captain turned to the girl. It had made almost as much of an impression on him as on his lieutenant to find her such.

"What do you know about this man?" he asked gently.

The slight figure straightened, her lips set in a straight line.

"I know," she said slowly, "that he is a traitor. He deserted from the Sixty-ninth Cavalry and went over to the enemy."

The captain's eyes hardened. The lieutenant stared at the girl in open-mouthed surprise.

"How do you know that?" demanded the older officer.

"Because—" said the girl slowly—"he wrote me so. I was engaged to marry him."

There was a silence that ran into minutes. It was broken by the prisoner.

"May I say something, sir?" he asked. There was a queer look in his eyes, one almost of exaltation.

The captain nodded.

The captive turned to the girl.

"You know, of course, that this means I will be shot?"

She lifted her eyes to his. They seemed now to beg for pity.

"Yes," she barely whispered.

"Yet you said you—loved me."

The girl's eyes were held by his.

"I—love you—now," she murmured.

"And you betrayed me—" he asked incredulously.

She moistened her lips.

"Yes—when I knew you had betrayed your country."

The light of exaltation deepened in the captive's eyes.

"God!" he said fervently, "to think that I am to have such a woman for my wife."

The wonderful patriotism that had carried the girl so far buoyed her now. Again she straightened.

"Do you think," she said, every word as distinct as the stroke of a bell, "that even if I could I would marry a spy?"

The captive actually grinned at this.

"Not even if he was your own spy?" he questioned.

Then he turned to the captain. "If you will communicate with my colonel, sir," he suggested respectfully, "you will learn that I 'deserted' to the enemy by order of the commander-in-chief."

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Rugged Sons of the Woods

by HENRY OYEN

Author of "Gaston Olaf and Big Business," "Little Marie," etc.

MR. PETE BOILEAU and Mr. Spike Carlson came lounging down the station platform, bent upon the smoking-car of the Northern Limited in the congenial atmosphere of which they intended to play pitch during the hundred-mile ride back to Little Ax. It being January Boileau and Carlson had been in to report at the general office of the great logging company by whom they were employed. They had made their reports, had dined with the president, himself an old timber-cruiser; and now they were on their way back to the timber, glad to quit the town where they were so thoroughly out of place.

It was a bright, cold January day. A hard, dust-like snow had fallen during the night, coating the world with a covering of delicate crystals upon which the morning sunlight glimmered and shone with a brilliance trying to the unaccustomed eye. On the outer panes of the double windows of the long train lay gray films of hoar frost, and up ahead the big locomotive breathed heavily, its breath instantly transformed into white clouds upon contact with the cold air.

"Good logging weather," commented Mr. Carlson.

"First class," agreed Mr. Boileau.

They were passing the last Pullman vestibule. A few paces more would have taken them abreast the day coach, with no adventure befalling them, when a voice spoke and said:

"By Jove! Look at those two specimens. We're getting into the timber country sure enough. True, rugged sons of the woods!"

Perhaps it was the voice that riveted Mr. Boileau and Mr. Carlson to the station platform. Seldom, if ever, had they heard a voice just like this one. It was not the voice of a woman; it had too much volume for that. It was not the voice of a minister; it was too sweet, too pretty for that. It floated out upon the crisp Northern air like sirup upon the waters of a cold spring. It was a perfect charmer of a voice.

The two woodsmen were moving with their backs to the vestibule from whence the voice emanated. They came to a halt, but they did not turn around. Mr. Carlson bent his lanky form over and carefully and unnecessarily tied an extra knot in the laces of his high-top boot. Mr. Boileau pretended to be interested in the operation to the exclusion of all else.

"And this is the closed season for folks who ride in Pullmans!" breathed Carlson bitterly at his boots.

"I'll bet," said Boileau thoughtfully, "I'll bet that he's just as sweet as he sounds."

"'He?' 'He!' D'you mean to say anything that talks like that wears pants?"

"Huh! You haven't learned much from all the studying you do, Spike." Mr.

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Boileau was referring to Carlson's predilection for burying himself in the effusions of Bertha M. Clay and other creators of the same school. "Don't you know what a hero sounds like, you with all your reading about 'em? This is one of 'em. I never met a hero in my life, and I never read much about 'em, but I'll bet five pounds of Standard smoking that this is one of them animiles. I know—I jest know that that's how a hero ought to sound."

At this juncture the voice poured out its saccharine flood again.

"Simple, rugged sons of the woods! Knowing little of the world and caring less! There must be something winning about their mode of life, though, Bella. They know none of the struggles and responsibilities that we know who occupy great positions. And look at their costumes. How simple. I shall improve upon that, however. I have an idea of what the proper costume for the part should be."

Now there was nothing in the world the matter with the costumes of Messrs. Carlson and Boileau. They had been down to see the president of the company and they knew what was proper and good, so they had dressed up, by adding a black string tie to their entirely proper Winter costumes. For footgear they wore high-top rubbers and thick socks; their stagged-off overalls were of a brand tested and approved in the bush; their mackinaws were red enough to suit an Indian; and the whole was topped with decorous fur caps. Pete Boileau especially prided himself on the propriety of his apparel no matter what the time or occasion, and he and Spike exchanged a look of surprise and anger.

"Yes, dear." It was a tired, woman's voice that spoke now. "But don't you think you'd better come in now. This cold won't do your throat any good, you know."

"And it won't do you any good to try to play guardian to me, as I've often told you." This was the man's voice, but with the sweetness gone out of it, and something new in it which grated, considering that the speech was addressed to a woman. "You are trying to become officious again, aren't you? Well, please bear in mind, that you are not at all necessary to this picture, and that at a word from me Simons will send you home."

"Bernard!" gasped the woman, with something like a sob of resignation. "Is that kind? Hasn't a wife the right——"

"Please! We won't have any of that. The wife of a great artist—oh, what's the use! I've wasted enough time trying to explain, but you can't rise—oh, bother!"

"It's just that you happened to have one of your cruel whims, that's all it is." The woman was sobbing frankly now. "I wish——"

"I wish you would stop your sniveling; do you hear?"

"Ye-ye-yes, Bernard."

"And go back in the car. You're not pleasant to look at when you snivel. I don't wish to look at unpleasant things."

"Ye-ye-yes, Bernard."

"And have a more pleasant expression to show when I come in," called the man as she shrank back into the car.

Pete and Spike looked at one another with eyes wide with astonishment. In their simple code such conduct on the part of any man called for drastic correction. Yet what right of theirs to interfere with the conjugal demonstrations of Pullman passengers? Theirs was the comfortable level of the odoriferous smoker. They were about to pass on to their pitch and their pipes, when the man in the vestibule digged the pit for his own steps.

"I say, my good man," called he, in truly democratic fashion, "can you tell me how far we are from Little Ax?"

With jaws sagging from amazement the pair turned and looked at him. The look gave them a shock. They had expected to see a small, dapper person. They saw instead a man who was almost as tall as Spike, which was six feet four, and who weighed fully as much as Boileau, which was two hundred and ten pounds. They had expected to see a weazened, pasty countenance, the face of a man who might be expected to be "mean" to a woman; but instead they saw a strong, well-rounded physiognomy, such as would have been a credit to the most powerful of the Greek gods. A great mass of light, curly brown hair, long, curving lashes, dainty white hand flashing a large diamond ring, and a suit of delicate gray completed the picture.

Boileau and Carlson were surprised, but not in any fashion did they betray this fact. Their faces were stolid, even stupid, to behold.

"You don't mean us, I guess, mister,"

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drawled Spike slowly. "We ain't good, either of us."

The man in the vestibule smiled, showing a gleaming row of perfect teeth.

"How delicious! How naïve; how simple. I was not referring to your virtues or lack of them, my good man. That is merely a figure of speech."

"Oh," sighed Boileau, apparently relieved. "Thanks, mister."

The man laughed again. The simplicity of these rude dwellers of the woods was delightful.

"Don't mention it. How far is it to Little Ax?"

"About a hundred miles."

"As much as that? Dear, dear! These Northern railroads are so very slow. Thank you, thank you—my good man."

He vanished, laughing, into the Pullman.

II

PETE and Spike looked at one another.

"Well, I'll be darned!" gasped Pete.

"Same here," said Carlson.

"Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell you that voice belonged to a hero? Guess I know how a hero ought to sound."

"Pete," pleaded Carlson, "don't; please don't waddle out into snow above your depth. You're an ignorant timber cruiser, Pete Boileau, and you mustn't pretend to know anything about heroes. If I don't know what that was I'm sure you don't. Come on; he wore perfume; let's get to where we can smell some honest tobacco."

Like men in a daze they made their way to the smoking-car, fell into a seat and lighted their pipes. He who has smoked the terrible, yellow-papered tobacco most popular in the North knows that after the first few puffs all the rest of the world may be forgotten. The locomotive whistled sharply, the drivers bit the rails, the Northern Limited moved on its way northward, and Pete and Spike puffed away, forgetting for the nonce the strange being who rode in the Pullman behind them. Then came the news-agent, and Carlson, suddenly rousing himself despite the might of his pipe, reached forth a long arm and drew the boy to his seat.

"Butch, my boy, stand still and listen," said he solemnly. "Me and my poor, ignorant friend here saw something back in the Pullman that seems almost too good to be true. It was as big as me and Pete put together, it had on a light suit and curly hair, and when it spoke, it kind of sang. It wore pants, too. It called us 'good man.' Now you know we ain't good, Butch. We kind o' suspicion that it ain't real, like something that's been shot and stuffed, with a phonograph inside. Tell us, Butch, tell us quick, what is it?"

"You mean the big, good-looking guy, swell dresser——"

"That's what I said. Who—or what is it?"

"Leggo my arm," said the butcher. "Here." He produced a paper which had been taken aboard at the last station. "Read that—after you've spread yourself for a couple of my Rose of the River, first-class cigars, ten cents straight."

Carlson, having purchased the cigars, took the paper and read the item which the news-agent's grimy finger pointed out:

COMES NORTH TO FILM "THE FROZEN WAY"

Bernard Manville, Idol of Matinee Girls to Act Hero in Northern Novel for Moving Pictures. Intends to Make Play Absolutely True to Life.

The Northern Express this morning is bearing to Little Ax Mr. Bernard Manville the celebrated actor who is to appear as John Desmond, the hero in a picturization of the novel, "The Frozen Way." Mr. Manville, with his own company, is to make Little Ax his headquarters. Mr. Manville has expressed his intention of depicting faithfully the rugged life of the strong types with which "The Frozen Way" abounds. He announces that he will select part of his company from among the rough, rugged types which abound at and about Little Ax.

"He's a moving-pitcher actor, that's what he is," supplemented the newsboy. "There's a whole crew with him back there. He's the boss of 'em all."

For a while there was silence in the smoker. Spike Carlson read the story over again and carefully folded the paper and thrust it in his mackinaw.

"When you marry a squaw, Pete," he drawled, "and your grandkids come dangling around Uncle Spike, I'm going to show 'em this and tell 'em how me and their grandad, when we was young and husky, saw this bird and lived to tell the tale."

Mr. Boileau was grinning triumphantly.

"I told you he was a hero," he insisted.

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"Yes sir, he certainly is as hero-ey a hero as you could find."

"He called us 'my good man'," said Spike darkly. "That's what I'm thinking of. And he said we were simple, rugged children of the woods."

"We'll ask him if he meant it when we get to Little Ax," said Boileau. "Maybe he was only joking."

"Joking! Didn't you hear how he abused that little woman. A man who's mean to a woman don't joke; he's too ornery. You'd understand that, Pete, if you had brains like your Uncle Spike."

"Your brains!" said Pete scornfully. "Your brains! Why didn't you use your brains the night Little Marie——!"

He stopped suddenly, gritting his teeth. This was a subject upon which the two friends were supposed to be silent as the grave. It had to do with a certain occasion when Pete and Spike were ready to slay one another because of a certain mischievous woman's laughing eyes. The woman had merely played with them innocently at a dance; and the pair had sworn to forget it, to never mention the occasion under any circumstances. Also, they had let it be known that others were to forget it, too, and one man with a playful sense of humor, who had quipped merrily with the name Marie, escaped with a whole body merely because his fleetness of foot had carried him to the rear platform of a speeding caboose two jumps ahead of the pursuing Pete and Spike. To remind the pair of Marie was the red flag to a bull combined with an orange ribbon in a St. Patrick's Day parade. It was a bad break on Pete's part, and to cover it up he admitted handsomely:

"Oh, well, of course you have got some kind of brains, Spike—'bout as good as a Chippewa's, anyhow."

"Get the cards," said Carlson pleasantly. It was Pete's break, not his, and he could smoke and smile pleasantly while his partner squirmed under the sense of his error. "Your deal, Pete. Do it with your mouth shut tight, I would if I was you."

"My mouth shut?" growled the smarting Boileau. "Why so?"

"Because if you open it you'll put your foot in it, Pete. Deal 'em out, Pete. Fine weather for logging, ain't it, Pete?"

Pete's broad, swarthy countenance seemed to swell and grow darker as he viciously shuffled the cards. Because of his Gallic temperament the episode of Marie had cut more deeply into his being than was the case with Carlson, and because of his choleric nature he raged more easily when the affair was recalled to him. There being no opportunity to explode his irritation at present he shuffled the cards, while his anger smoldered inwardly and betrayed itself in the ominous flash of his black eyes.

"Deal 'em out, Pete," repeated Carlson, smiling beatifically.

"I'll deal 'em when I'm ready," growled Pete.

A long, blue-clad arm shot over his shoulder from behind and fell upon the cards.

"No gambling allowed on the Northwestern," laughed the deep voice of Conductor George Duncan. "Hello, boys. Got your tickets all right? All right. Say, Spike, there's a gent back in the Pullman, got a letter of introduction to you."

"Throw him off then, Dunc', before we get to Little Ax," replied Carlson promptly. "I've had enough of those fellows hoisted on me. The next city man who wants to have me chaperon him around a logging camp in action——"

"This gent's an actor," interrupted Duncan carelessly. "His name's Sandhill, Danville—something like that."

For a space there was a silence in the seat. Carlson was holding his breath; Boileau was shuffling the cards to hide his excitement. Finally Carlson cleared his throat cautiously.

"Could you—could you have another try at that name, Dunc'?" he pleaded. "Danville—are you sure——?"

"Manville! Bernard Manville! That's it," exploded Duncan, as his memory served better. "He's got a letter of introduction from the company agent in Chicago. He let me read it. Anything you can do for Mr. Manville, Spike, will be greatly appreciated by the Chicago branch of your company."

Carlson did not trust himself to speak; Boileau began to play solitaire, studiously keeping his eyes on the cards.

"Why don't you go back and see him now, Spike," continued Duncan sociably. "He's due to serve this letter on you at Little Ax; but what's the use of waiting? Come on, back; I'll introduce you. He's anxious to see you. You'll have a good time, I'll bet."

"I'll bet," agreed Spike, as he rose in a daze and followed the conductor.

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III

BACK in the Pullman Bernard Manville looked up with interest as Duncan brought the tall woodsman to the fore.

"This is the Mr. Carlson you were asking for, Mr. Manville" volunteered Duncan. "He's the Superior Company's walking boss at Little Ax. If you want anything in the bush there, he's the man you'll have to see about it."

Mr. Manville was the essence of democracy; he held forth his hand and allowed Spike to shake it, his manner indicating that though conscious of the honor he thus bestowed he did not grudge it to the most humble.

"If I'm not mistaken I saw you on the platform at the last station, Mr. Carlson?" said he. Without waiting for a reply he continued: "It was very droll, your saying you weren't good. Hah ha! Very droll. Won't you sit down, Mr. Carlson? Won't you have a drink? No? You don't drink? Well, well! You astonish me, astonish me greatly, indeed. I thought all you lumbermen—well, never mind; you surely will have a cigar, won't you?"

"Thanks; got one," said Spike, suddenly perceiving a mission for the news-agent's Rose of the River.

He had intended carrying the treasure home to bestow upon a young cookee whom he was trying to cure of smoking too young; but now he drew it forth, bit off the end, and filled Manville's immediate vicinity with a cloud of smoke. While performing these operations he was thinking: this gent is just a little bit too glad to see me, just a little bit; he wants something; wonder what it can be?

"Nice weather for logging, Mr. Manville," snapped Spike, as his victim writhed to get away from the smoke.

"Yes, yes; I have no doubt. Charming weather—delightful—my dear sir, won't you have one of my cigars. I'm sure you'll enjoy it more than that—than that—specimen you have."

"Thanks," said Spike, accepting the proffered Havana. "Smoke it later," he concluded and stuffed it carefully away in his mackinaw.

The actor gave it up. He contented himself with drawing as far away from Carlson as the transaction of business allowed. From a safe distance he held forth the letter of introduction, requesting that Carlson read it before they continued their intervi

As Duncan had said, the letter was fr the company's representative in Chic It informed Spike that the bearer, M Manville, would want some slight assi ance in staging his filmization of a North story. Could Mr. Carlson find time assist Mr. Manville? If so he would co fer a great favor, etc., etc.

"Good so far," said Spike noncommittal "It all depends upon what you want, M Manville. January is the month when make saw-logs, so we're busy; but anythi we can do in reason, we'll do it."

"Yes, yes." The great star was obvious distressed. "First of all, would you mi trying the cigar I gave you, Mr. Carlson?"

"Reasonable enough," said Spike, reject ing and changing smokes. "Now, y were going to say——"

"That I don't wish to impose upon you good nature any more than I can help, Mr. Carlson. First of all, did you ever read 'The Frozen Way'?"

Spike shook his head.

"Did Bertha M. Clay or The Duchess write it?"

"Oh dear, dear no! No——"

"Then I never read it; them's my fav-o-rites."

Mr. Manville looked sidewise at the woodsman, as if half suspecting the truth of this assertion.

"Well," he continued briskly, "the big scene, Mr. Carlson, is where I battle Branton, the bully of the woods, in the fifth reel. Branton is the hired thug of the heavy—the villain of the picture. The whole picture is built around my combat with him. This fight must be perfectly true to life. I intend to make it the greatest fight scene ever filmed. I have been unable to find a professional with the physique necessary. None of them can stand up to me a minute when I begin to do fight stuff, Mr. Carlson, and the scene must have a man strong enough to give me a considerable struggle, a desperate struggle, in fact, before I defeat him."

"Oh," said Spike, "you win the go, do you?"

Manville laughed.

"Of course I win; that's the picture."

"And what d'you want me to do?"

The star leaned forward impressively.

"I want you to pick me out the real thing—a real, big, crude, brutal, tough, vicious, strong woodsman—to fight me in the big

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scene. You know everybody in the woods up here, I understand. I couldn't find a professional fit for the job; but there must be a man among all these woodsmen who can give me a real fight—he doesn't need to act—just fight."

Carlson rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Why, there's quite a few of the boys who think they're pretty husky," he said doubtfully.

"This one must be quite husky, Mr. Carlson," said Manville impressively. "Because when I begin to do fight stuff I lose myself in the part, and I become a perfect fury. I may do him real damage—but I am willing to pay as high as twenty-five dollars for a man."

Spike nodded. It was something new in his experience; he had known men under the influence of liquor to seek combat with the strongest men about Little Ax, but here was a man, perfectly sober, who was eager to do it, and who insisted that his opponent be strong. He was still pondering over this new situation when Mrs. Manville came to the section in search of a magazine.

"I don't wish to disturb you, Bernard," she said apologetically, "but I'm sure I left it here. Have you seen it?"

"No," snapped Manville. "Can't you even keep track of your magazine?"

The little woman drew back. Carlson, looking down, saw that Manville was sitting on a magazine.

"Is that what the lady's looking for?" he asked pointing.

Manville drew the magazine forth, looked at it, sneered, and tossed it up the aisle toward his wife.

"There you are; now please don't annoy me any more. Now, what do you say, Mr. Carlson; do you think you can find me such a man? I forgot to tell you he must be rather squat in build, short-necked, and of low, vicious appearance—a vicious, low, brutal type, that's the description. Do you think you can help?"

Carlson was looking out of the window. This was a new world to him; here was a white man mistreating his wife and nobody interfering. If it had been an Indian—but a white man, and a nice little woman.

"Yes," said he, when he could speak calmly, "I'll get you a man."

"You understand the type, do you?"

"Let's have him again."

The actor repeated his description of the type he was seeking, emphasizing the viciousness and brutality of the man desired. Carlson suddenly was stricken with a fit of coughing.

"That's funny," he stammered. "Why, I've got just the man you want on this train. Why, sure!" Spike suddenly grew enthusiastic. "He's on this train right now. Low, and brutal, and vicious, you said, mister? Looks as if he'd rob his grandmother and could chew twenty penny spikes? I've got him; come with me and take a look."

Forward to the smoking-car then Carlson led the way. At the door of that reeking affair he paused.

"He's sitting on the left-hand side about six seats from the door. You just open the door and look."

Manville looked. The seat mentioned contained Mr. Pete Boileau.

"Well," said Spike, "how about him? Ain't he vicious and low enough to suit any one?"

"A good type, a first-class type," said Manville. "But has he the intelligence, the spirit, Mr. Carlson? You see, in this big scene I accuse him of having kidnaped my little sister. The accusation drives him into a frantic rage. It is the only acting he is required to do, but that is necessary, quite necessary, indeed."

"You mean—you mean you want him to look mad?" gasped Carlson fearing that what he heard was too good to be true.

"He must register rage, yes; just for a flash."

"All right," said Spike. "I'll tell you just how to make that old fatted sepulcher look mad."

And then he told Bernard Manville just what to do at the psychological moment to obtain the effect desired.

IV

WHEN Spike returned to the smoker and slumped down in the seat opposite Pete Boileau the latter continued to play solitaire as if nothing had happened. Instead of the outburst of indignation that Spike had expected there was on the cruiser's face a sweet smile, a satisfied smile and a contemptuous one.

"Did he kiss you?" he asked delicately at last. "I see you and him getting so affectionate out there on the platform I figger

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he must have give you a parting kiss, anyhow. When are you going to paint your eyebrows and go on the stage, Spike?"

Then it was Carlson's turn to smile. He leaned far back in his seat and beamed upon Pete affectionately.

"I ain't the one who's going to be an actor, Pete; it's you."

"Go ahead," said Pete with deep resignation, "you always was an insulting cuss."

"You're going to get a week's wages for about two hours' play-acting. Ha! That makes your old Canuck ears stick up, I guess, eh? Yes-sir, Pete, that hero-actor took one sight at you and, says he, 'Who is that magnificent specimen of manhood? I must have him,' says he. 'I've hunted all over the country for such a fine specimen of manhood. I'll give him five dollars,' says he, 'if he'll act a couple hours for me. That build, that figure!' says he. 'Ah!' Personally I don't see——"

"Of course you don't," interrupted Pete. "You think a man ought to be built like a spike, just because you happen to be made that way. Sensible folks have different ideas. That hero-guy is right sensible—for such a good-looking guy."

"Well, that's nothing; the main thing is how I stuck up for you, Pete."

"Huh! I can see you doing that!"

"I says to him, 'Mr. Manville, that poor, ignorant boy is under my charge,' I says. 'He works for me, and I'm not going to stand by and see him swindled just because he's low and ignorant. If you want to use him for two hours you've got to pay him. If you want to use him for two hours you've got to pay just one month's wages for him, twenty-five dollars.' Says he: 'You're on; though surely you must be mistaken about his being low and ignorant,' says he. You see, Pete, when folks don't know you, you can fool——"

"Shut up! You're too funny. Business is business. You're lying about the twenty-five."

"Not a lie. They're coming out to Camp Three tomorrow morning, and you're to be there and do as they tell you and let 'em photograph your magnificent shape."

"And I get twenty-five—cash?"

"Sure."

"For twenty-five dollars," murmured Pete contentedly. "Spike, for that much money I—I'd be willing to look like you—for two hours. Yes sir, for that I'm willing to almost forget how this hero guy called us his 'good man.'"

"Your job," explained Spike, "is to fight the hero to a finish, but he's promised not to do you any harm."

"Eh?"

"He's promised not to hurt you. He'll probably get real rough with you, Pete, and heave you around considerable, but he's promised to go as easy as he can on you, so you needn't be afraid."

"Oh," grunted Pete. "So I needn't be afraid, eh? Well, that certainly is nice. 'Go easy' with me, eh? Oh, well; I'll stand for that, too, for twenty-five."

"Pete," said Spike, suddenly, "what was the name of the lady you mentioned a little while ago?"

Pete looked up in surprise. A slow sullen rage betrayed itself upon his countenance. Without a word he slouched down the aisle to an empty seat, and for the remainder of the ride to Little Ax he and Carlson spoke not a word together.

At Little Ax Carlson again spoke privately to Manville.

"You haven't forgot what I told you about how to make Pete look mad, have you? Don't do it until the right minute, because you can only work it once."

And to make sure he once more repeated what he had confided to Manville in the Pullman.

V

THAT afternoon and evening must have been a busy one for Spike Carlson, for there was no one else in the world who could have canvassed Little Ax as effectively as did he. For no one else than Spike would the mill-town's residents have turned out, as they turned out next morning, to view the picture-making at Camp Three, and no one else than himself could have given authority for such a large number of the logging company's employees to take a day off. It is quite certain that he used his influence with the owner of the Pine Tree Hotel, where Pete and he lived while in town, and where Pete considered himself the idol of the dining-room girls, to drive a number of the girls out to the camp, and he also paid the liveryman to collect and bring out a sleigh-load of other girls from town. Pete Boileau, the best dancer along the river, was a great favorite with

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the ladies, and, said Spike, it wouldn't be right to deprive his many admirers the opportunity to see him at his best.

"Pete," explained Spike, "won't act his best unless there's ladies present."

So Bernard Manville was greatly gratified when, in the clear, crisp morning, he was driven out to the location of the big scene and saw fully a hundred spectators, one-third of them young women, gathered to do him homage. It was a pleasing spectacle to the great man. The location was an immaculate, snow-covered clearing directly behind the camp. The spectators were gathered in a circle, and the tassel-capped girls, their cheeks rosy from the keen air, their young eyes bright with adoration, were banked on a little knoll behind one of the cameras. It was there that Manville turned his heart-breaking eyes most early and often. The director and his menials might attend to the grosser details of scene preparation; Bernard Manville made a chest, tilted his chin, and played upon the ladies the full power of his long-lashed, heart-breaking orbs.

"The little darlings!" he murmured to Mrs. Manville. "See how they follow me, Bella. Really, I must become acquainted with some of them. The young blonde near the stump interests me strangely."

"Yes, Bernard," said Mrs. Manville; but Spike Carlson accidentally came across her some minutes later crying in her muff, and he smiled. Which was a strange thing for a man usually so gentle to women and children to do.

Pete Boileau, after he and Manville had rehearsed the big scene a couple of times, spoke forcefully and to the point.

"Twenty-five bucks before the circus begins," said he. "I don't know this game and I want to see your chips before the draw. Twenty-five, cash in hand."

Having received his money, and having tucked it away carefully beneath his belt, Pete stepped forth into the arena. As he looked around at the circle of spectators a glimmer of suspicion flitted across his expression. He saw Spike Carlson trying to hide himself behind a bevy of giggling girls, and for a moment Pete halted in doubt. But he had been paid his money, he had given his word, and, though he knew, as he knew Spike Carlson, that a trap of some kind lay before him, he must go through the bargain.

At last the interminable details of the director's preparations were over.

"All ready, boys?"

"All ready," replied the four camera men.

"We're all ready then, Mr. Manville, if you are. Mr. Boileau, please."

Pete Boileau stepped forward warily, his bright, black eyes on the alert for signs of the trap which he knew had been prepared for him. He saw that Spike Carlson no longer attempted to hide himself, but stood upright, grinning shamelessly above the tasseled caps of the girls. Pete kicked up the dry snow viciously. Spike Carlson did a merry little jig.

"Come on, now; first a clinch," whispered Manville. They clinched. "That's right. Now I hurl you from me." Pete was properly hurled. "You leap up. That's right. We clinch again. I throw you again." Pete, obedient to instructions, let himself go and Manville threw him furiously to the ground. "That's right. Up again. Once more now. Right."

For the space of many feet of film the combat raged, working up in intensity to the real fight, the scene that was to be the greatest fight stuff ever made. Manville's artistic fury increased. The blows he dealt Pete increased in fury, his handling in the clinches grew rougher, more reckless. Pete took the buffets as good-naturedly as might be. It was humiliating to be hammered and tossed around by this soft-handed person, but twenty-five dollars was a lot of money, and Pete believed in delivering goods paid for. One thing troubled him—each face in the circle of spectators, including the girls, and especially including Spike Carlson, bore a smile or grin of delighted anticipation.

"Now the big stuff, Mr. Manville, if you please," shouted the director. "'You skulking hound; you're the villain who kidnaped my little sister!'"

But Bernard Manville did not use the line from the script. This was the moment of the big fight, the moment when his opponent should explode with rage and the terrible combat begin; and Mr. Carlson had kindly told Mr. Manville how to inspire an expression of rage on the part of Mr. Boileau.

As they stood facing one another crouched with clenched fists, tense nostrils, and fast-coming breath, Manville, following Spike Carlson's tip, said so loud that all the spectators heard:

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"Don't you wish Little Marie could see you now?"

For the space of three long seconds the visitors from Little Ax, who knew about Marie held their breaths. Then they howled. Pete Boileau's great chest filled with a long, slow breath. He took the twenty-five dollars from his belt and hurled them at Mr. Manville's feet. He leaped four feet straight up in the air.

"E-e-e-YOW!" he bellowed.

And then—then things happened.

He dove head first and caught Mr. Manville about the waist. He raised Mr. Manville above his head and dropped him in the snow. He caught Mr. Manville by one leg and swung him around twice, finally dropping him into a convenient drift. Mr. Manville fell on his face so Pete rubbed the actor's head hard in the snow. Then he caught Mr. Manville by two legs and ran him around for awhile, after the manner of a wheel-barrow. This sport palling he raised him and threw him hard.

"'My good man!'" hissed Pete at the first fall.

He repeated the performance.

"That's for 'rugged, simple children of the woods'. And here's another—for being mean to your wife."

A fourth time they struggled and a fourth time the actor rested in the snow.

"And that," said Pete, contentedly, "that's for Little Marie."

Mr. Manville, springing up, struck Pete once and ran. Pete ran after him.

"Look out!" cried Boileau, but it was too late. Manville went headlong into the ice-cold waters of the camp spring, and Pete Boileau swore, because he had to go in and save his victim's life.

Mrs. Manville came up quickly to bear her husband away. Of course she called Boileau: "Brute! Oh, you utter brute!" But nevertheless there was a look of relief as she led the crest-fallen actor past the group of girls including the young blonde who had interested him strangely.

"Take me back to the hotel, Bella," moaned Manville. "Oh, dear, oh, dear; how distressing!"

Mrs. Manville helped him into the sleigh, placed his handsome head upon her thin shoulder and stroked his cheek.

"Bella, Bella dear!" murmured Manville gratefully.

Mrs. Manville held her chin high above her husband's head and looked patronizingly at the young blonde. As the sleigh whisked them away from the camp she patted the head on her shoulder and smiled.

Pete Boileau and Spike Carlson that night went by sleigh to their duties in a camp deep in the timber and far from Little Ax. Ever and anon, above the jingle of trace-chains, the steady jog of the tote-team, and the clank of the sleighs, their uncontrollable laughter rang out in the stillness of the dark timber.

"Hello, my good man," chuckled Carlson.

"I ain't a good man," replied Boileau. "I'm a simple rugged child of the woods."

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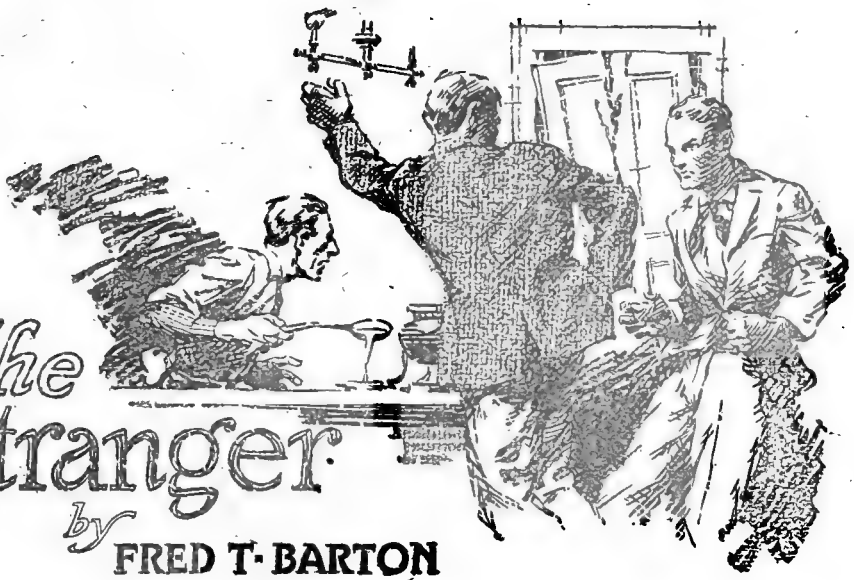

The Stranger

by FRED T. BARTON

Author of "The Taming o' Andy MacArdle"

IT WAS the easiest thing in the world for Jimmy Nevins to "spot" the detective on the corner. Perhaps it was that natural animal impulse, or unconscious reasoning, which prompts a man to sense an enemy. There was nothing particularly characteristic about Detective Sergeant Gowdy, except, perhaps, his six feet of bulky brawn, but Nevins had been in the game too long to pass up a city "dick" without knowing it.

"Wonder if he could catch a nap if that lamp-post was a couch?" said Nevins to himself as he slouched nearer and contemplated the detective's broad back.

It might have been instinct on Gowdy's part that made him turn suddenly and face the rather disreputable-looking man behind him.

"Hello, Mr. Detective," grinned Nevins through a two-days' growth of beard.

Gowdy, surveying the short, heavy-set young man, squinted his eyes angrily. The sergeant prided himself on being a first-class criminologist—one of the best on the force. And he wasn't such a bone-head but that he realized he was being "kidded." He mentally ran through his card index of criminals, and tried to remember where he had seen the face of the rough-looking fellow before, but admitted defeat. That made matters worse. Here was a "dip" he didn't know getting intimate.

"You're a fresh one—where'd you get the detective stuff?" he snapped.

"Can it," came the reply. "You're just shouting headquarters. Why don't you wear your badge on your hat?"

The sergeant's face flushed. He started toward his tormentor, but that stocky person stepped warily away.

"I wouldn't," chided Nevins. "You wouldn't bother to bag me, and besides you've got nothing on me."

Gowdy's vanity was touched and he choked back his wrath. The chief had detailed him to the biggest case on the docket, and he didn't propose wasting his time on a bum "gandy-dancer."

"Clear out or I'll run you in and make it hot," he growled. "I'll get you some time, don't worry, if you hang around this burg long."

"All right, Mr. Officer—good-by," and Nevins slouched on down the street.

There was a sting in the parting that tempted Gowdy again, but, instead, he swore under his breath and watched with professional alertness until Nevins turned the corner.

"I'll get that guy," muttered the sergeant.

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Jimmy Nevins, rounding the corner, chuckled to himself.

"Maybe I shouldn't have ruffled that cop," he argued.

His face assumed an expression of cold seriousness as he scanned the numbers on the ramshackle buildings. He picked his way over rubbish, walked around a crowd of dirty, noisy children, and stopped before a two-story frame dwelling. It was a rusty old house, squeezed between a single-story feed barn and a three-story tenement. Before Nevins answered the battered "Rooms for Rent" sign, he looked about closely. In front of the feed barn a man was lolling in the sun. He watched Nevins from under the greasy bill of his corduroy cap. To all appearances the man was of the teamster type, commonly known as "skinners."

A slovenly, hard-eyed woman, with stringing hair, opened the door in answer to Nevins's knock.

"Got a single bunk that ain't workin'?"

"Sure—come in," she said, eying him appraisingly.

She slipped back into the dark hall, her carpet slippers flapping on the bare floor, and Nevins followed. Down the corridor and up a flight of rickety stairs to the second floor, the woman led. She threw open the door of a room, and stood back as Nevins stepped in.

"It's good enough—how much?" he decided.

"Four dollars—in advance," was the shrewd answer.

"What do you think I'm doing—buying the house?" growled Nevins, starting toward the stairs. "I only want to pay by the week."

"I'll make it three dollars," called the woman hurriedly.

Nevins grinned, counted out the money and pocketed the few pieces of small change that remained. Inside the room he carefully locked the door and surveyed things. Through the dirt-frosted window he looked out on the roof of the feed barn. The building was so close he could easily have stepped to the flat roof from his window.

It was growing dark. The electric sign on the corner saloon blinked. There was a tramping in the hall without, and two men passed his door. He heard them enter the room adjoining. Presently other footsteps came up the stairs. Nevins stepped out into the hall and was fumbling with the lock of his door as a third man came down the hall.

"Howdy," volunteered Nevins.

"Hi," answered the other, "yer a new roomer?"

"Yep."

The man disappeared into the same room the others had entered a few minutes before.

At the corner saloon Nevins found the long bar crowded with men; some with the undeniable stamp of criminals on their hard faces; some merely burly toughs; some weak-faced and shifty-eyed; and most of them in various stages of intoxication. To the police "Mike's Place" was known as "The Show-up,"—the melting-pot of the crime fraternity.

The newcomer edged in at the far end of the bar. Next to him stood the teamster from the feed barn.

"Some beer," ordered Nevins, and the big slopping mug slid deftly down before him, propelled by Mike's head bartender.

The teamster drained his mug at the same time.

"Have one on me," he offered.

"Sure," answered Nevins and "two more" came down.

The two watched the sluggish foam subside.

"Any luck?" The teamster spoke in a low voice.

"Hardly—yet," was the indifferent answer.

A man slipped into the rear, swung a battered pail to the bar and ordered "a dime's worth." Nevins recognized him as the one he had met in the hall at the rooming house. He watched the man slide a silver dollar on the bar and receive the change. With a significant glance at the teamster, Nevins trailed the man outside.

"Goin' back?"

The man looked at him keenly and nodded.

"Walk back with you," persisted Nevins.

Apparently the man was not over-zealous for companionship for he only grunted.

"Guess I'll turn in," yawned Nevins at the top of the stairs when they arrived at the rooming-house.

He fumbled for his key. The other stopped, evidently undecided as he watched Nevins a moment, and then walked on to the next room.

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IT WAS growing dusk the next evening when Nevins slouched toward "Mike's Place." In front stood the man he had walked back to the rooming-house with the night before. The fellow was talking with a big, powerful man, whose thick lips were only partially hidden by his heavy, black mustache.

Apparently Nevins overlooked Detective Sergeant Gowdy standing on the curb, for the next moment he collided with that burly person. Gowdy turned with an oath.

"It's you, huh?" he bellowed as he reached out and jerked Nevins toward him. "You're a frisky young dip. Now clear out o' here. I've got your number, and first thing you know you'll be looking through the lattice-work—git," and the sergeant punctuated the dismissal with a slap that sent Nevins reeling.

The black-mustached man and the other had been interested spectators to the affair. As Nevins dodged around the corner he caught the eyes of the two watching him, and he returned their quizzical gazes with a wink.

It was hot in his room and he left the hall door open to encourage the draft through the window. Some moments later two men tramped up the stairs and down the hall. As they passed his door one of the men looked in and paused.

"What's the trouble with you and the bull?" grinned the man Nevins had met the night before.

"Aw, that's just a wise cop's way of having sport," was Nevins's surly answer. "But he ain't got nothing on me—yet."

Outside in the hall he heard the two men conversing in low tones for a moment.

"Like to play a little pitch?" called the man, leaning into the door again.

"Seeing I got nothing else on hand, don't mind if I do."

"My name's Walker—call me 'Slim,'" introduced the man. "Meet 'Big Bill' Burke."

"Glad to know y'. We got another pal bunkin' with us," rumbled the big man, who was recognized by Nevins as the one Slim was talking with on the corner.

"Nevins is my moniker."

Burke and Slim led the way to their room. Inside, at a table, idly shuffling a greasy pack of cards, sat a small, wiry young fellow, whose sallow face was pierced by a pair of deep-set, black eyes that scowled at Nevins.

"This guy's Nevins—bunking in the next room," said Slim. "This is 'Weasel' Compton, Nevins."

"Aw, cut the Weasel," snapped the fellow at the table irritably.

"He don't like his handle," grinned Burke by way of apology.

Compton's long, tapering fingers continued to caress the cards as the three drew up chairs to the table.

"Here's the thirst-quencher," grunted Burke, lifting a pail to the table. Then he turned and called, "Mary—oh, Mary."

A door at the side of the room, unnoticed by Nevins until now, opened slowly, and in the dim light stood a slender wisp of a girl. He guessed her age at nineteen, or possibly less. As she came slowly, almost timidly, into the room he saw she was trimly dressed in shirtwaist and skirt. She was rather a strange contrast to her surroundings—perhaps the more so to Nevins because the memory of the slovenly woman, with whom he had bargained for his room, flashed into his mind.

"Did you call?" came the low-voiced query from the girl.

"Bring some glasses," growled Burke, gathering up his cards.

The girl, as she passed toward a cupboard in the rear of the room, looked at Nevins, only for a brief instant, but, in that moment, he read the fear that lurked in her wide, blue eyes. Suddenly he was aware the others were awaiting his "bid." He "passed," not knowing what bid had gone before, but as he glanced at the three he found that another was more interested in the girl than in the cards. That one was Compton.

Mary Burke returned to the table. As she placed a glass at Compton's corner he glanced up at her, his thin lips smiling. Nevins saw the fear in the girl's eyes shade, for a moment, into defiance as she met Compton's smirking glance, and her lips curved slightly in contempt.

"That's all, Mary," said Burke, scowling across the table. "Play your cards, Compton."

Nevins heard a key turned softly in the lock after Mary Burke had closed her door. He paid and collected small stakes as the play progressed. Several times Slim slipped away with the pail. Each time Compton gave him a silver dollar, and each time Slim returned the change to the Weasel.

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"Not spending this money at the same place?" asked Burke once.

"Nope—mixing 'em up," answered Slim.

Compton scowled at Big Bill, but the latter laughed.

"What's your line?" Burke asked presently.

Nevins shuffled the cards.

"I inspect porches—sometimes," he answered, flipping out the cards.

Compton studied his hand and bid "two."

"After night, I suppose," volunteered Burke, grinning knowingly.

"Perhaps," came the indifferent reply.

"It might be all right—" Burke played a card—"but rather risky, ain't it?"

"Every man to his calling," was the philosophic answer.

Nevins raked in the last hand, claimed the game, received his winnings, and arose from the table.

"Be around tomorrow night?" asked Burke.

"Maybe," grinned the other. "S'long."

BUT the next night Nevins left the house at dusk. At the corner the teamster fell into step with him, and the two were swallowed up in the darkness.

It was early in the morning when Nevins let himself into the house, and slipped upstairs to his room. He met Burke in the hall in the afternoon.

"Come in tonight for another game," invited Big Bill.

"Sure," promised Nevins.

He was on hand shortly after dark. Compton played with surly suspicion; Burke displayed a sort of rough gaiety; Slim devoted himself to the game in silence. Not once during the evening did Nevins see Mary Burke. Once, at a noise from her room, he caught Compton covertly eying her door. Burke's growl brought the Weasel's mind back to the game.

"I'm thirsty—suppose you snag a pail, Nevins," said Burke later.

Compton jerked his head back, and eyed Burke angrily. Big Bill grinned blandly back.

"Aw, give him the coin, and don't look so nasty about it," rumbled Burke.

Compton smiled and spun a dime on the table.

"Might as well let him get change for a dollar," scowled Burke meaningly. "You'll need the chicken-feed."

Big Bill's eyes, for a moment, lost their good-natured twinkle, and seemed to command Compton.

"I'm managing this dump," he said coldly. "Slim's been at the business long enough—fork up a dollar."

"You're a —— fool, Bill," Compton snarled, but he slid a bright, silver dollar toward Nevins.

"What's all this argument about?" inquired Nevins.

"Nothin'," replied Burke. "Better pass up Mike's Place—I don't like his beer."

A shadowy figure stepped out of the alley next to the feed barn, and followed Nevins. At the rear entrance of a near-by saloon the two met. Then Nevins dodged inside. When he came out he stood for a moment in the light reflected through the door.

"Here you are, you runt—rushing the can, huh," came a voice.

Nevins looked into the face of Detective Sergeant Gowdy. Beside the sergeant stood a blue-coated patrolman.

"You know there ain't no such a thing as can-rushing in this district," roared Gowdy. "Fan him, Cassidy, and learn him a lesson."

Cassidy needed no urging. His night stick cut the air before Nevins could leap aside. The blow landed solidly, and the aim was true. He attempted to follow it up but only the warm night air was disturbed for Nevins was well on his way. The sergeant's harsh laugh accompanied him.

"Stubbed my toe, and slopped some," Nevins explained as he took his place at the table.

"Change," demanded Compton.

The three men watched Nevins closely as he counted out the remainder of the dollar.

"Have any trouble with the coin," smiled Burke.

Nevins looked at Big Bill questioningly.

"No—why?"

Burke laughed rumblingly.

"It was phony."

"Phony—what's the idea?" inquired Nevins.

"That's what—it was phony," continued Burke. "I guess you ain't so soft as to be shocked. You, a piazza explorer, ain't goin' to shy at a legitimate trade such as manufacturing a little of Uncle Sam's medium of exchange. We need another

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pal what's steady and got nerve. How'd you like to retire and have a job spending perfectly good dollars what's just as good as that what comes out of the mint at Washington—just as good, but circulated at a bigger profit?"

"Say," said Nevins, his jaw protruding as he arose to his feet. "What are you guys trying to put over on me, anyhow? You mean to say you're molding the queer and want me to peddle it?"

"That's about the dope," replied Burke.

"I told you—he hasn't got the nerve," leered Compton.

"Shut up," ordered Burke.

Compton's sneer seemed to sting Nevins. He flashed a glance around the table, contemptuously meeting the squinting eyes of the Weasel, and the keen, searching gaze of Slim.

"All I don't like about this business is that it's out of my line," he said deliberately. "But speaking of nerve—you fellows make me tired. I'll just take your proposition a whirl. It'll make cigaret money. Shuffle the cards."

"Now you're talking," grunted Burke.

Slim began flipping the cards around. Four times during the evening Nevins slipped out with the bucket and a bright, new dollar. Each time the shadowy figure followed and met him at the doors of the different saloons.

"Come around in the morning," called Burke as Nevins left the three after receiving his first "cut" of the profits.

"IF YOU get rid of these without a yell, you'll be going some," said Burke the next morning when Nevins left with ten dollars in counterfeit coin. Some time after dark he made his way down the narrow street toward the rooming-house. He stepped into the glare of the electric sign in front of Mike's Place. A ponderous, gripping hand fell on his shoulder.

"You're givin' me sore eyes," growled Detective Sergeant Gowdy. "Guess I'll jug you—come along."

"You—you big stiff—you're crazy," gritted Nevins. "You know what you're doing——"

Gowdy's fist swung in a short jab. It was not a hard blow and Nevins saw it coming in time to dodge. As he wrenched away the glancing blow sent him sprawling. He fell like a sprinter at the "take off," but he didn't wait for the starter's signal. He "leaped the gun."

In three bounds he turned into the alley back of the saloon. Behind came a roar and a flash—then another and another. Detective Sergeant Gowdy wasn't aiming high, for the lead chugged into the ground about Nevins's feet. Bullets were more than he had bargained for.

"Lost his head—the fool," panted the fleeing man.

At the next block he turned down the street. As he flashed under the arc, a shrill police whistle from behind was answered by one ahead. Nevins dashed into another alley and doubled back. Midway down he slowed up and slid along close to the buildings, and arrived in the rear of the feed barn.

A telephone pole stood close to the building. It was somewhat larger than a porch post but Nevins didn't hesitate. Up, up—slowly, slipping back and then worming upward, he gained the iron foot-hooks. He hung there for a moment, dizzy and panting.

Down the alley came the patter of feet. Nevins dared not move. A dark figure hurried past. It was Cassidy. When the policeman turned into the street Nevins slipped from the pole to the roof, and, crouching low, he ran across toward the second-story windows of the rooming-house.

"Good thing Gowdy don't know my abode," he murmured to himself as he straddled the narrow gap between the barn roof and the window-ledge.

The sash slid up and he ducked into the room. He raised his arm in the darkness to search for the gas-jet. It wasn't where he thought it should be. He stumbled over a chair, and finally located it. The next instant the gas flared, lighting the room.

"Wh-what are you doing here?"

Nevins whirled at the words and faced Mary Burke. The girl stood, wide-eyed and frightened, her youthful body flattened against the hall door. He stared at her and then his gaze traveled about the room.

"The—deuce," he ejaculated. "Miss Burke—I'm sorry—I made a mistake. I thought this was my room," he finished lamely.

The girl still watched him suspiciously and her tense body trembled.

"But—but you came through the window—those shots?" she whispered.

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"I forgot my key and came over the roof," he lied, ignoring the last of her question. "I'll go now if you'll let me out," and he stepped toward her.

Apparently she was somewhat reassured. She was frightened no longer, but, instead, her eyes questioned quizzically, and she made no move to step aside from the door.

"If you forgot your key, perhaps you had best go back out the window and into your room over the roof," she suggested, with a trace of sarcasm.

Nevins smiled rather foolishly. For the first time he noticed the girl wore a trim, modish hat and street coat. At her feet was a small, cheap traveling bag.

"You were just leaving—going away?" he asked sharply, nodding toward the bag.

"Is it any of your business?" she flashed.

"So—you were," said Nevins grimly. "I suppose your father and Compton and Walker already have beat it."

Defiance and anger leaped into her face.

"'Father and Compton,'" she repeated contemptuously, a flush firing her cheeks. "He's not my father—my father's dead—my mother's dead—he's my uncle—he brought me here—I didn't know—oh, can't you go—you'll tell them—I'm running away from it all, and——"

She cut short the flood of hysterical sentences, which had poured forth unbidden. Her gloved hands were clinched, and she trembled as she stared appealingly at Nevins. He watched her keenly as she sank sobbing in a little heap on the floor. Stepping to her side he placed a clumsy hand on her shoulder.

"Listen," he said awkwardly. "You're all right. I had my doubt about you at first. Don't run away—yet. Promise me you'll stay, just a little while longer, and I'll help you."

Mary raised her face and looked into his eyes searchingly. Nevins wished for the moment his scrub beard was shaved, but the girl looked only at his eyes and was reassured.

"If you'll trust me—" began Nevins.

"I must—I will," she said positively. "I've got to trust some one. I don't know where to go, or what to do."

He was aware that Mary Burke was pretty, and rather appealing as he backed away, and, for some strange reason, left by way of the window he had entered. Perhaps it was to make good on the tale about the lost key. He stood for several moments on the roof in the darkness outside her window, and then clambered into his own window.

NEVINS joined the counterfeit trio some time later.

"How'd you come out?" asked Burke anxiously.

Compton was nervously fingering his chin. Slim was scowling. Apparently something had gone wrong.

"Only one guy called me, and I gave him good money," answered Nevins. "I got by with nine of the wheels—what's the matter with you fellows?"

"Who was shooting down by Mike's a while ago?" questioned Burke.

"Heard some one say that cop, Gowdy, took a few shots at a guy that got away from him," replied Nevins carelessly. "But what's——"

"That's the dick what's on our trail," cut in Burke. "But he hasn't got us spotted yet. One of his pigeons tipped me today that Gowdy was working on a bum coin case. He knows the stuff's coming from this part of town, but he's not wise to the exact spot. We're going to run the mint tonight and blow the dump before morning. Are you in?"

"Nope, I'm not in," assured Nevins. "I'll help pass the stuff but I'm not going to help make it."

"Backing down—I knew it," taunted Compton.

"Backing down, ——," said Nevins angrily. "Go on with your job. I'll look on and blow with you. I ain't losing any nerve. I'll just drop down and spend this last phony coin while you fellows get things to going."

"Better keep that bum buck in your pocket," warned Burke as Nevins left the room.

Outside Nevins turned down the street past the feed barn. This time he waited for the man who stepped out of the doorway. It was the teamster. Together they entered the corner saloon.

A moment later Nevins, alone, hurried back to the house.

"Lock the door," ordered Burke.

Compton was feeding thin pieces of metal into an iron pot which was heated by a blowtorch. Slim manipulated the blue flame. On the table lay the white plaster of Paris

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molds. A loose board along the edge of the wall marked the hiding-place of the "plant."

"We make good coin," muttered Burke proudly. "We're not hogs. We use half silver. Gives it a ring. Compton's the best one at the business makin' molds."

Silently the operations proceeded. The metal in the pot sank into a molten, blue mass. Compton stirred it with a small ladle.

"She's ready," he said shortly.

Burke slid the molds beside the torch. Compton lifted a ladle of thick metal from the pot and carefully poured a thin stream into the mold. A board creaked in the hall. The four men straightened, tense and listening. Terror paled the faces of Slim and Compton.

Then came a crash and the door of the room trembled and split. Burke, roaring a curse, leaped for the gaslight, at the same time whipping a revolver from his hip. Nevins's foot swept out and tripped the big man, sending him floundering into a corner. The revolver went spinning across the room. There was a splintering of glass as Slim disappeared through a window to the roof of the feed barn. Another crash! The shattered door fell and into the room sprang a man in a greasy corduroy cap. Behind him crowded Sergeant Gowdy and Cassidy.

"Put 'em up high," snapped the teamster. "No monkey business goes."

From the roof outside the window came sounds of fierce fighting. Burke, cursing, heavily regained his feet, and, with Compton, obeyed with their arms akimbo as they looked into the uncomfortable ends of three police "regulations." Through the window scrambled Slim, urged on by the prodding of a similar blue-steel instrument.

"Give me the cuffs, Cassidy," ordered the teamster.

"Sure, Mr. Webb."

Bob Webb, the teamster, also of the United States secret service, stepped up to Burke.

"How do they feel, Bill?" he smiled as the steel clicked. "We knew it was your job, Compton. Come on—step up and get hitched. And you, Slim—you're next."

Sullenly Slim slouched to Burke's side. Compton stumbled weakly. Detective Sergeant Gowdy strode toward Nevins.

"Line up there with the rest of 'em," he roared. "I told you I'd get you—you —— crook."

Nevins tried to duck. The sergeant's fist staggered him. He recovered and launched one of his own, sending Gowdy reeling across the room.

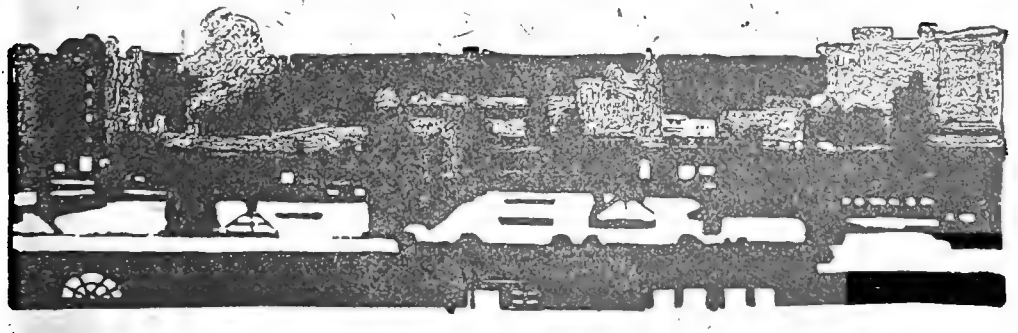
"I've got that coming from you," gritted Nevins.

"Stop, Gowdy," shouted Webb, leaping in front of the enraged sergeant as he swung his revolver on Nevins. "Let me make you two fellows acquainted. Gowdy, meet Mr. Nevins, who gets most of the credit for this catch."

"Why—why, the devil didn't—" sputtered Gowdy, but Webb turned to Nevins.

"Didn't the chief say something about a girl being along with the Burke-Compton gang?"

"Don't recall it if he did," answered Nevins thoughtfully. "If there is she's not in on this deal. By the way, do you mind if I leave the boys in your care?" one hand reflectively sought his scrubby bearded chin. "I need a shave."



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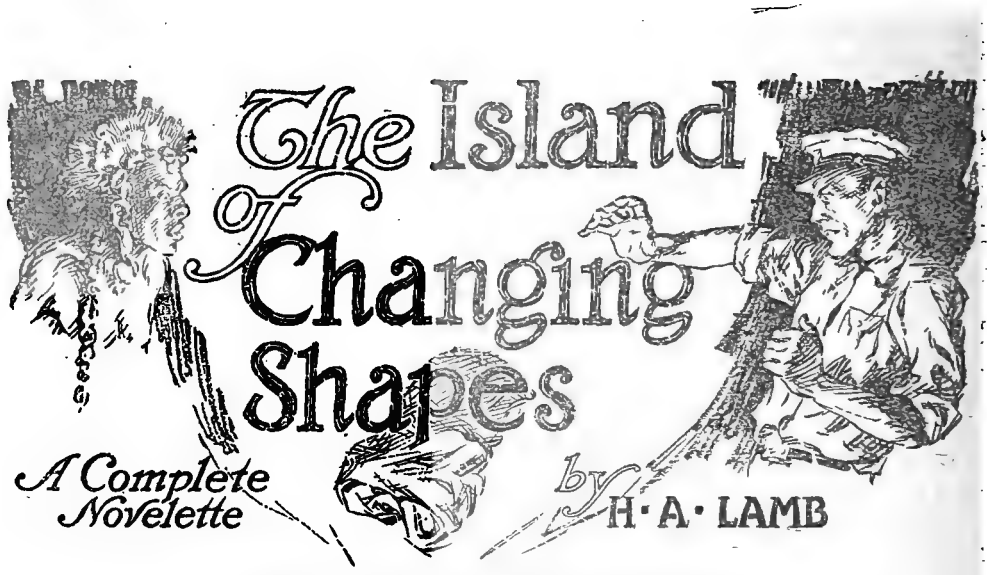

Author of "Khlit," "His Excellency the Vulture," etc.

THE Island itself didn't change its shape. It was the men that came there that changed. They weren't ordinary men, at that. They were dead. Yes, I went to the Island of Changing Shapes, with Ensign Warner and *the other*.

Let me tell you, I've been twenty-five years in the U. S. Navy, and in varied trouble most of the time. If you asked some one about me he'd say that Tim McGonigle, bo'sun, was short in brains, but long in luck. That's according to how you look at it. Considerin' that I blockaded the Dons in Cuba in '98 in a New York harbor tugboat, and chased the misguided followers of Aguinaldo in a monitor with a six-foot free-board, likewise invaded the port of Vera Cruz with a dreadnought, you might say I was lucky.

Likewise you might think it of the U. S. Navy that had to work with tugboats when cruisers was needed, and with dreadnoughts when they ought to had gunboats. But it wasn't luck that we came through them times. It was efficiency, A 1 brand. All I got in the way of a wound in twenty-five years was a broken tooth that came from chewing on a Mauser bullet imbedded in a piece of hardtack.

The place where I was up against it, first chop, was the Island of Changing Shapes. That's where I made the acquaintance of Doctor-Man Maribara Torai, and smelled the odor that comes from Mount Takiha. I said it was a place for the dead. Well, it may sound loony, but we were as near dead there as two men could be.

If you want facts, you can find them in the log of the *Wasp*, U. S. gunboat, for July, 1912. You'll find Warner and me reported missing and probably dead. Likewise, a record of how the *Wasp* shelled the village of Ambrym in revenge for our murder. Then there was a wireless sent to Warner's father, notifying him of what had happened.

At the Island of Changing Shapes, Ensign Warner and I lived alone with the dead at the *Amil* House, while Doctor-Man Torai watched us. If it hadn't been for the nerve of Chip Warner I'd be there yet. I'd be in the *Amil* House with the headmen and counselors of seven hundred years, with bits of shell where my eyes were. The winds that whispered around Mount Takiha would stir my hair, which would be painted red, most likely.

It was the heat that did it. The heat that struck us as the *Wasp* began the leg of her cruise from Sydney, Australia, to the Strait of Magellan, and melted the ice on board. Our schedule had called for a week's repairs at Sydney—the engines had loosened up a bit coming down from the Philippines—and two weeks' steaming to the Strait.

We'd got out among the New Hebrides, when the heat became past telling. Even the officers, who had electric fans and blowers in their quarters, slept on deck, and the men strung their hammocks anywhere they could find room. The heat below decks from the galleys, fire-room and engine-room was enough to make a Dyak turn yellow. Naturally, water was used up fast.

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The old man noticed this, and passed the word along that we were to stop at some of the islands to take on a new supply. That was how it started. Because when we breasted Ambrym the white sands and cool-looking pines caught the eye of the deck officer and he slipped me the word to pipe the boat falls.

The gunboat hove-to a little ways from shore, and the gig was manned, with a Maxim in the bow, for we'd learned not to trust the islanders hereabouts too much. The officer that climbed down into the stern was Ensign Warner.

"Chip" Warner, as the men called him when he wasn't in hearing, was a newcomer on the *Wasp*. At least this was his first trip with us, and he was fresh from Annapolis. He wasn't like the average youngster; for one thing he had a quiet way about him that got the men to jump quicker than for some of the older officers, and he came of Navy stock. His granddaddy commanded a steam frigate in the Civil War, and you would know his father if I told you the ship he steered into battle at Santiago.

There were a couple of uncles of Chip's who had seen service with the various branches of the Navy—one went north of Hudson Bay to rescue an explorer who was stalled in the ice. So Chip had training of a sort that counts when he came to take hold of the men. Maybe you'd call it traditions, or heredity, but he was a first-class officer from the first. A medium-sized youngster, with flat shoulders, curly hair and a pair of alert gray eyes, extraordinarily quiet. The family expected a lot of him, and perhaps that's why he took himself so serious.

One of the Warner family wasn't in the Navy. For that matter, he couldn't do much of anything. That was Chip's older brother who had a game leg. There's no place for a man with a crutch on a warship, and Ned Warner felt this keenly, so much that he kept away from Chip and the others, living his own life. Of course it wasn't Chip that told me this. I got it from his father, who had told me to lend the youngster a helping hand if I got the chance.

I DIDN'T have much time to wonder about his family, for Warner took the tiller and steered us for the shore at a point where the surf wasn't breaking over the coral reef. We worked inside the barrier, and by the time we had beached the gig a swarm of natives was stringing out of the scrub to say how'de to us.

They were a sizable lot, taller than any other blacks I'd seen, except the Santa Cruz people. Instead of spears they carried little bows with bunches of arrows. These arrows had long thin tips for a business end, no bigger than your little finger, coated with a red, waxy-looking substance. I'd heard that red stuff was a deadly poison, for all the natives in the New Hebrides are expert poisoners.

Just at present they seemed more inclined to gab than to fight. Two men in the lead came up to the gig and started a palaver. One of them was a chunky fellow with a pair of sawed-off britches who'd been to Queensland and could talk *bêche-de-mer*.

"Me Malum," he explained to us, "plenty gammon altogether. Him big fella here King Naumali, plenty good fella. What for you come along us, white man? We trade 'um copra, yams, plenty good——"

He went on like that for a moment until Ensign Warner stopped him.

"Ask him if there's a supply of fresh water on the island, McGonigle," said he. "You know their lingo."

"Plenty water, my word," broke in Malum who'd caught the officer's drift. "You come along village you see plenty water altogether."

"He wants us to come to the village for it, sir," I explained to Warner.

He nodded, like he'd gathered as much himself. He was running his eye over King Naumali who was something of a dandy, being bully of the island and cock of the New Hebrides. Naumali wore the half-moon of pearl shell around his neck that shows high caste. Likewise he had a clay pipe and a fine knife stuck in his ear-lobes which were stretched until they nearly touched his shoulders. The rest of his smoking outfit, along with the betel-nut chewing-kit, was stowed in a ditty bag that was slung at his waist by a belt that was made of native shell money.

Judging by the size of the belt Naumali was the Andy Carnegie of these parts. He carried a spear with a point a foot long of barbed human bone. His face was lined and scarred and his eyes glinted in a way I didn't half like. The way I sized him up, I'd as soon put my bare foot on a *fer-de-lance*.

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as turn my back to King Naumali with that spear in his hand. What Warner thought he kept to himself, but I made up my mind to see he didn't take any chances with Naumali and his men.

"Where is the village?" he asked Malum, after a moment's thought.

"Him village along there, one mile, Master," said the interpreter, grinning like a fat toad. "You come along big fella Chief Naumali, get plenty water. No good go boat, coral reef one, two, three mile out to sea."

Warner was anxious to see the water supply of the place, and like the young fool he was, he made up his mind to take the most risky course. He said he'd go to the village with me, have a look around and return to the gig. Likewise he told Malum that King Naumali and the rest were to march in front of us, and if he saw a nigger moving in back of us, it'd be a dead nigger. Malum seemed happy enough with the arrangement. Probably he was used to having visitors take precautions.

It didn't suit me overmuch, but it wasn't my place to object. The chances were a dozen to one the natives wouldn't start anything with the gunboat in the offing, anyway. So I shouldered my Springfield and tramped along in the sand beside Warner, in the wake of Naumali. It was about a mile from the village around a bend in the coast that hid us from the gig and the ship.

When we got to the place, however, it was all I could do to keep from cussing aloud. Water supply? Why that village got its drinking and bathing water from a dirty fresh-water stream that flowed out of the bush with a couple of dozen pigs lying around in it, and flies, swarming so thick over it you could hardly see the surface. The sun had warmed the stream until the water was a little under the boiling-point, judging by the feel of it. It looked to me like we'd had our trip for nothing. Hot? Whew—there was steam coming up from where the sweat lay on my shirt.

But Warner had found something else to interest him. There was a schooner anchored a little ways out from the village, and with his high-power sense of duty, he was bound to get to interview the skipper and find out where the *Wasp* could get a supply of fresh water. Malum, who was sulky because of my cussing him, told Warner that there wasn't any one on the schooner. The white man who owned it, he said, had gone off somewhere and left it. Next Warner asked the name of the vessel, and Malum muttered something like He-festus, as nearly as I could catch it. *Hephæstus?* Well, that might have been it.

Nothing would do after that, but Warner must go off to the schooner and look things over. Malum dried up as a source of information when he was questioned about where the white man had gone to. Finally he revealed the fact that the skipper had gone over to the other island and had not come back yet. Malum pointed out the place. It was an island about the size of the one we were on, with wooded shores, and a bare mountain peak rising in the middle.

That peak attracted my attention, because it was unusual hereabouts. It lay about two and a half knots from where we were. The weather was moderately thick, on account of the heat, and there was a mist around the lower part of the island, only the peak, broad and flat, standing out clear. That was my first sight of Mount Takahi.

BY THIS time I was dead anxious to get back to the gig. The villagers was crowding around us too close for comfort, and I wished we'd brought the boat and the Maxim around the reef. There was no sign of any mischief brewing, but I'd seen treachery before out of a clear sky and I didn't watch King Naumali any the less closely. His Majesty was obliging enough, for he got out the royal canoe to take us to the schooner.

This canoe was not a common dugout, but a craft build of planks, made fast with sennit. The seams were calked with paste, while pearl and cowrie shells had been fixed near the bow in designs that represented golden beetles. This design was repeated through the village, painted on the plaited coconut leaves of the palaver hut and the witch doctor's establishment.

In the stern, under a canopy of thatched palms was a big seat, large enough for Warner, myself, King Naumali and Malum. We took good care to keep the others in view, and when we stepped to the deck of the schooner I whispered to Warner to tell them to keep clear of the craft.

To make sure that everything was safe I stayed on the deck by the after companion, while Warner went below to investigate. This gave me a chance to run my eye over

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the vessel and what I saw stirred my curiosity not a little.

First place there wasn't a soul on board. The usual kanaka crew was missing, and I knew there wasn't much likelihood of the boys being ashore, for the Ambrym village was not an attraction to them, valuing their heads, I suppose, more than a trip ashore. Of course the kanakas might have gone over to the other island with the skipper, only it seemed queer that no one was left to watch the schooner. Everything on deck seemed in order, the sails reefed, the decks clean.

However, I didn't do any great worrying over the matter. If there was anything amiss Warner would ferret it out. Presently I heard him call me from the cabin and I jumped down the companion.

The interior of the craft was as orderly as the deck, and as empty. The main cabin gave on to two smaller ones, the door of one standing open. Here I found Chip Warner, seated on the skipper's trunk with a book and a batch of papers in his hand. The bunk was made up tidy-like, and a rifle hung near at hand on the wall. But what caught my eye was Warner's face. His mouth was drawn tightly together, and there was a brooding look in his brown eyes that meant he was troubled over something.

"Look here, McGonigle," he began, and his voice was a shade lower than usual, "what do you make of this? It puzzles me. I've been glancing through the log this fellow kept of his voyage, and by the evidence at hand he's been gone from the schooner for three days. He really did go over to the other island, but it was three days ago, and the log says he went with only his Dutch mate, leaving the boat in the hands of the others on the ship. Where have they got to?"

"There's no one on board, sir?" I asked, receiving a shake of the head for answer. "Well, the mate might have gone over to the other island with the rest of the crew when the skipper didn't come back. Perhaps the man's sick ashore. On the other hand, Naumali and the natives might have had a hand in the business. Only if they'd wiped out the crew, the schooner would be sacked by now. And everything's shipshape on board."

Warner looked up at me thoughtfully, and back to the book he held.

"This is the lay of it, McGonigle," he said in his curt, quick way. "The schooner *Hephæstus*, Samoa, and Honolulu, skipper American, came to anchor off the Ambrym village a week ago. Skipper traded fruits and vegetables with natives. Didn't like water, wanted to search for it on the other island, which he says the natives call The Island of Changing Shapes. For some reason the kanakas refused point-blank to go there. Said the place was *tabu*, much *tabu*. An English-speaking native—probably our friend Malum—warned him not to go to the island."

"Did Malum explain why, sir?" I asked.

"It does not state in the log. The entry for the next day has this. Skipper had noticed on three days of the four he was here—the log only runs to three days ago—that the villagers of Ambrym, several thousand, assembled at the shore, apparently to watch the launching of a small canoe, with a golden beetle design on the prow, out to sea in the direction of the Island of Changing Shapes. As far as the skipper could see, a current carried the canoes directly to the island. He could not get Malum to say why it was done, but the local witch doctor seemed to have a hand in it. He offered ten sticks of tobacco to any native who would take him across, but the offer was turned down."

"If the island was really *tabu* to these chaps, sir," I put in, "ten times that bonus wouldn't make them set foot on it."

"So the American and the mate put off to the island themselves, McGonigle, in the dingey, three days ago, Apparently they were curious about the place. The American seems to know a good deal about the religious cults of these islands, and he thought he'd struck some new fetish in the Island of Changing Shapes—where he got the name doesn't appear. He notes in the log that the place must be sacred for some reason. Anyway, they went, three days ago. There is no entry in the log since then. And the schooner is deserted."

Well, I looked away from Warner who seemed to be troubled by what had happened, and round the empty cabin, and I doubted if that skipper would ever see his ship again. In these waters a schooner is a trader's castle, and when he abandons it, most likely the natives have got him one way or other. Where were the kanakas? And why hadn't Naumali looted the schooner? There was a nasty look to the matter.

"What are you going to do about it, sir?" I said to Warner.

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"Do, McGonigle?" He got to his feet smartly, and his jaw was set in a way that meant business. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this without wasting any time. You and I are going over to the Island of Changing Shapes."

"Yes, sir," I added, for I had a suspicion of what he was planning, "in the gig, of course. We can return——"

"No," he said quickly," we can't waste time doing that. We'll go with Naumali in his state canoe."

I had a dozen good reasons why we should not do that, but before I could spit them out, Warner was up the companion, and over the side of the schooner into the stern of the canoe. There was nothing to do but follow him, and I was nearly left at that. Before I could resume the conversation on the canoe Warner took Malum by the shoulder, and tapped his automatic meaningly.

"We're going," he said briskly, "over there, to that island." And he pointed to the Island of Changing Shapes.

Well, the instant he did that and the natives caught his drift every man of them except King Naumali rose from his seat and dove over the side. As soon as their black heads came up they struck out for the shore like a lot of porpoises. It would have looked funny, another time.

II

IF I T hadn't been for King Naumali we'd never have got the natives back into the canoe. They swam ashore as quickly as they could. The beach was within earshot of us, however, and once they were on dry land his Majesty started a palaver with them.

I couldn't get the drift of what he said, not knowing the language, but it was pretty plain that he wanted them back into the canoe and they preferred the shore. I guessed that Naumali was telling them what he'd do if they disobeyed him, for presently they began to straggle back, swimming out to us. All but Malum, that is. He beat it up to the village.

King Naumali tongue-lashed the others until they took their seats and headed us for the island. Yet it looked to me like the king himself wasn't any too eager to take us there. He kept shooting glances at the place as the shore came nearer and the white strip of beach showed, and before long he reached into his ditty-bag and hauled out something that looked like a large pebble until he stuck it into his mop of hair. Then I saw it was a golden beetle.

Warner wouldn't listen to anything I had to say about our expedition. He sat on the thwart of the canoe watching the island. Anyway, there was no pointblank reason why we couldn't do as he wanted. As long as the gunboat was handy with her three-inch quick-firers the natives couldn't rush us for fear of what would happen to them. Likewise we had them covered from where we sat. All the same I had a feeling in my spine that things wasn't as fine as they looked. Why had the niggers jumped overboard when they knew where we wanted to go? And where were the skipper and mate of the schooner?

When we neared the beach Warner pointed out a likely landing-spot and the canoe was run up on the sand. Several of the blacks jumped out and we followed them. What happened then was due to my carelessness. It wasn't but a second that I lost sight of the blacks, yet it gave them the chance they was looking for—the black devils! It happened like this: I'd no sooner set foot on the sand than I caught sight of another track made by a boat landing, with footprints all around it. I called the ensign's attention to it, and both of us bent over the tracks.

Yes, it was plain carelessness. Before I knew it the rifle I held was twisted out of my hands and wrenched free. I swung around, only to find that the two natives who had secured my weapon were running into the water toward the canoe which had been launched already. The rifle was thrown to the men in the canoe, the two swimmers caught hold of the sides, and before I had more than reached the water's edge the whole outfit was pulling into deep water with a chorus of yells.

Warner's hand flew to his automatic, then dropped limply to his side. The thong holding the pistol in its holster had been cleverly cut and the automatic drawn out, probably while we were getting out of the canoe. The whole thing had been planned in advance and carried out with all the cunning of the Ambrym men, inspired no doubt by King Naumali.

There was nothing to do but watch them as they drew away from us. The yells

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changed into a kind of chant that kept time with the paddles, and the canoe flew through the water toward Ambrym. We had been tricked completely and left to ourselves on the Island of Changing Shapes.

If Warner was disturbed by it, he didn't show it. All he did was to return to the tracks and study them carefully. After a while I joined him.

A boat had landed at the spot, and the tracks showed that two men who wore shoes had left it and struck into the brush from the beach. The chances were twenty to one that these two were the skipper and mate of the schooner. They had landed on the island, then. But what puzzled us was the fact that no footsteps came back. The boat had been pulled up on the beach, the two men had left it; and yet the boat was gone without a sign of any one's coming back for it. Of course others might have been left in the boat when the two went ashore —if it hadn't been for the testimony of the log which stated that the two white men had come alone.

We didn't look at each other, Warner nor I, being each baffled by the strange tale written in the sand. All we knew was that the two men had landed and we followed the footprints to where they disappeared in the grass under the pines and plantains.

The sun was dipping into the sea by then, in back of Ambrym, which gave us a little relief from the killing heat. The canoe had reached the village and was now out of sight. There were no signs of the gunboat.

Only an hour or so of light remained, and Warner decided that we would stay at the edge of the bush where we were and keep a lookout rather than try to search for the other two that day. So we picked out a spot where a clump of tall grass stood in the middle of a cleared space and squatted down where we could watch what went on in the other island. We talked over the situation without result. I don't think either of us was alarmed that evening.

You see, things hadn't begun to happen yet on the Island of Changing Shapes. We hadn't had time to do any figuring on what was going to come our way. It didn't look like such a serious fix. I told Warner that as soon as the men from the gunboat—of course they would send out a searching party—didn't find us on Ambrym, they would come over here to look for us, since the distance was too great for good observation, even with glasses. The old man would try everything to get hold of us.

That was what I told the ensign. I wasn't so cocksure myself. First place, the gunboat was clean out of sight of the Island of Changing Shapes, being around a headland of Ambrym. Second, no one on the vessel or in the gig had seen us start for here. The only way our men could get a clue as to where we were was from King Naumali and his people. And suppose King Naumali kept quiet about where we were?

The more I thought of it, the less likely it seemed that King Naumali was anxious to give out information about us. He had taken a lot of pains to leave two men from a U. S. warship weaponless on a lonely island. It was a cinch he had no idea we'd get back to the ship. For reasons of his own, he'd keep mum about us, if it came to a show-down. As for us, he counted on our staying where we were put.

Another thought came along and fastened on me. The people of Ambrym were known as a head-hunting, treacherous bunch. When we were reported missing, the old man would go through that island from end to end, and tear every hut in the village to pieces. When they didn't find us then, they'd figure we had been croaked by the people of Ambrym. Would the old man think it worth while to come over to the Island of Changing Shapes?

Here we were, a commissioned officer of the U. S. Navy and Tim McGonigle, stranded within half a dozen miles of our ship, without means of getting back again. And all along of Warner's foolhardiness in coming off without the gig, and my stupidity in letting them get away with my rifle.

As for the island itself, we didn't know the first thing about it. It might be inhabited, or it might not. All we knew was that the natives were dead scared of something on it, and two white men had landed here some three days before us who had not reappeared.

Well, it didn't do any good to waste my brains trying to think what would happen to us. I slipped away to rustle some grub before dark set in. There was plenty to be had. In a mangrove swamp I dug out a few juicy oysters for a fish course, and added a bunch of bananas to these by way of fruit. I came across some nangi-nuts and with the lot I returned to the officer.

The bush had been utterly silent during

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my trip through it, except for some pigeons that fluttered away through the plantains. When we had finished our evening meal the heavy dew was beginning to fall and the heat of day was giving way to the dampness of night.

We arranged to watch by turns, and when the stars came out the ensign dropped off into a sound sleep with me sitting by him wondering how long it would be before we were taken off from the Island of Changing Shapes.

III

SUNRISE came in a mist curtain that held fast until well on in the morning. We couldn't see the other island, of course, so after we'd had a wash and breakfasted off the remains of our dinner, Warner proposed a scouting expedition inland. He said he wanted to get on the top of the mountain where we could see the gunboat while, owing to the mist, it was useless to stay on the beach, but I felt that he had the other two white men on his mind. Something was worrying him, something that I couldn't place at the time.

So off we went to make the circuit of the Island of Changing Shapes and for hours we hiked through the brush until we figured we were about on the other side from where we started. Then we headed inland.

Right there we had a surprise. We hadn't gone but two miles through the pines and plantains when we came out into a bare plain. There wasn't a tree or shrub in front of us, only a barren grayish stretch of ground that rose into the slope of the mountain. And now we saw that mountain near at hand, we understood what it was—a volcano that had laid waste the island down to the strip of bush around the shore. The volcano, by the looks of it, was extinct.

The sun had come up by now, and the climb to the summit of the crater was harder than a tramp of twenty miles in a cool climate. The ground under us was baked, and the heat came shimmering up from it. Luckily we had located some fresh water streams in the wood belt, so we were not handicapped by thirst.

When we got to the top the first thing we saw was the gunboat at anchor just where she had been the day before. We could make out the gig putting off from her to shore, and I guessed that the old man was stirring things up on Ambrym, looking for us. Men of the U. S. Navy can't drop out of sight without somebody's asking why and asking mighty earnest.

"Hello," Warner cried, pointing down to one side of us, "there's a hut. Didn't know there were any inhabitants on this island of ours."

As he said, there was a huge hut standing in the middle of the bare plain on the other side from where we'd climbed the crater. At first glance I was struck by its size, more like a palaver house, but with a couple of stick-like poles in front of it that resembled gods. It wasn't long before we were approaching it, past a nest of huge rocks that littered the base of the mountain. All of a sudden I stopped.

"What's the matter?" demanded Warner, with the first sign of nerves I'd seen him give. "You're not afraid are you?"

It was the smell of the place that had brought me up all standing. The wind brought a whiff of it our way, and the next instant my companion got it, too. It was a smell I had never come across before—a dry, putrefying odor that was stringent and viler than a Chinese chicken yard.

It would have taken more than a smell to keep us away from the hut, which we now saw to be lofty, and made of plaited coconut leaves. On either side of the entrance the two gods stood, leering at us with their painted faces. The smell got worse as we neared the door which was nothing more than an opening in one side of the structure.

Warner was the first to go in, with me at his heels. Once inside we stopped dead in our tracks. The place was even larger than we thought, viewed from the inside. Light came in through an opening in the roof. In front of us, like a church, an aisle extended the length of the building, running clear up to the wall. On the wall facing us was hung a mat woven of very small grass, closely plaited. On the mat, whether painted or laid on, was a golden figure, enormous in size, of the golden beetle. The design was the same I had seen on the canoe and the huts in Ambrym.

But that wasn't what caught our eye first. We found ourselves not alone, but the center of a throng of hundreds of men, ranged on either side of the building, staring down at us. Perhaps there were two thousand in all, in ranks from the row seated on a long stone bench beside the aisle to the last row that

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hung from the rafters of the ceiling by their necks. All these figures were motionless, their cheeks painted brilliantly and their eyes glaring. They wore the usual lava-lavas, pearl shell and beads. Many held spears; others, bows and arrows.

The sight was enough to startle any one, and it was a moment before I saw that the figures were images, made of some kind of clay, which was molded around the original skeletons. Warner went up to one, and touched the face. It was made of the same clay, with bits of shells in the eye sockets, and red paint daubed on the cheeks. The house was filled with the images of the dead, and the thousands of blind eyes that peered at me sent a shiver down my back. And the smell!

"A pleasant company, Tim," said Warner with a grin. "Looks like we have wandered into a lodge of the dead. The beetle over there seems to be the emblem of the fraternity. Wonder where the Grand Master is?"

"Don't, sir," said I, for I hadn't got over my first scare. "They aren't things to joke about. How did they get there, now? And what are they doing—in the form of the living?"

"A burial-place, evidently," replied he thoughtfully. "The skeletons are filled out with clay. Something like the mummy idea. It doesn't help us any to find the men we are after. Let's get back to the shore."

"The sooner we get out of this here wax-works exhibit, the better it'll suit me, sir," I told him, for the place was giving me the creeps, with the blind eyes staring at us, and the silence of it. "I hope them dead people don't take it into their heads to walk around at night, sir," I added as we started down the sweltering slope again.

"No fear of that, Tim," he said. "I've heard of the *Amil* houses in these islands, where the natives plaster up their headmen and best warriors after death in a kind of council chamber where the tribe meets for a palaver. Probably the house back there is one of the *Amil* houses, although the natives on Ambrym hardly seem to want to come here to confer with the departed."

He grinned at me like the cheerful youngster he was, and I winked back at him, feeling more natural, though not exactly cool, in the sunlight.

"That may be true, sir," I told him, "but will you tell me how all them dead men got arranged there like that? They didn't walk up to the building and sit down of their own accord."

"The place may be a forgotten burial-ground, Tim," he replied, though not with great conviction. "Maybe it's fifty years old——"

"Will you look at that, sir!" I cried, grabbing his arm.

Nearly to the shore I saw a small canoe, drifting along with the current that set in from Ambrym. It looked like it was empty at that distance, and at the rate it was traveling, it would touch the shore in a very little while. Probably, I thought, one of the canoes had got loose from the village and drifted here. I remembered the log book on the *Hephæstus* that said there was such a current.

WE QUICKENED our pace to get down to the shore and have a look at the new arrival. I saw that we were going to reach the shore about the same time that the canoe did. Some trees got in the way for a while and it wasn't until we were a hundred yards from the drifting boat that we got a clear view of it. We were standing in the bush, with a lot of huge boulders between us and it. But we could look down into it, and what we saw sent a chill racing up and down my spine.

The cargo of the canoe was nothing else than a dead body. Resting full length on the bottom, the figure was dressed in the customary clothing with a bow and arrows in its stiff hand. I thought I recognized the pair of sawed-off britches it wore, and sure enough, it was our talkative friend Malum—only I guessed he wouldn't gab with us any more. There was one thing more I noticed. On the eyes of the canoe were figures of the gold beetle.

"Get down to the shore quickly," Warner hissed at me, setting the example by springing down among the rocks.

For perhaps thirty seconds we lost sight of the thing we were after, climbing through the nest of rocks, foul with moss and seaweed. Then we came out on the shore, and I looked around.

I was so sure that the canoe would be there, right at our feet, that it took me a moment to realize that it wasn't there. I looked up and down the shore for a good long way. No sign of anything. Then I waded out a ways and peered into the water. The canoe had been all but touching the

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shore, and the water was shallow at that point, with only a mild ripple of swell running. It wasn't possible for the canoe to have sunk there and not be seen.

"What the—" I began, when Warner cut me short.

"Come with me," he snapped, "lively there!"

I splashed out of the shallows and after him among the rocks where we had come out. We dodged and turned here and there through the boulders until we came out into the bush. Warner didn't stop there, but started on a dog-trot through the foliage, stumbling over the roots that climbed out of the ground and swerving to avoid the hanging creepers. I kept up as best I could, but being built with a wider beam and more displacement I fell behind. It wasn't until I came to the edge of the bare plain that lay around the crater that I caught up with him. He was stretched on the ground, panting, and I threw myself down beside him.

Warner's face was streaked with sweat, and there were lines under his eyes, but his mouth was still set in a straight line. My own nerve was beginning to show damages. First the *Amil* house, then the sight of dead Malum in the canoe, and the disappearance of the craft and body. It tallied with the strange removal of the other boat we had seen tracks of in the sand. And the two white men were still missing.

"——, sir," said I, feeling my voice wabble, "what happened to it— the canoe? It was right there half a minute before we reached the shore. Then it was nowhere to be seen."

He didn't say anything to that, but I saw his eyes narrow and he stared out over the barren plain to the crater top where the sun was making the air shimmer with heat.

"It's along of the *Amil* house, sir," I told him, my fears getting the upper hand for a minute. "This island is cursed, because it's watched over by the dead that sit up there in the council place. The two that came here before us have suffered by the curse, and our turn is coming. May the saints defend us."

That got an answer out of him. I guess it was the heat, and dizziness from lack of food that made me talk so wild.

"Stow that talk, McGonigle," he snapped at me, "and keep yourself in hand better than that. Our only chance is to keep our nerve. If you are going to get batty, it may do you good to know what I've figured out about this island—eh, bo's'n?"

He cocked his eye at me, tryin' to be cheerful, and I grinned back at him, sick enough, I'll warrant.

"Let's have the dope, sir," said I. "Any talk'll do me good."

"It's this way, Tim," he began slowly. "In the first place you understand what this island is, I suppose? The *Amil* house makes that pretty clear."

"You mean that there was a village here at one time, and the burial place is all that's left of it?" I guessed.

He shook his head.

"Not that. It's rather worse. It ought to be clear enough by this time. Take the Ambrym people—they hold this island sacred. Why? They are afraid of it. Why? Because if they ever land here they never return. Why? Because they are dead."

"Do you figure that applies to white men, sir?" I asked, and I saw that his smooth face was graven with pain.

"I am afraid so, Tim. Take the canoe with Malum in it. The log in the *Hephæstus* spoke of canoes that were *sent* over here regularly. Why? They contained dead men, like Malum. These bodies were for the *Amil* house. In other words, the Island of Changing Shapes is the burial-place for Ambrym, and other islands. None but the dead come here."

"What of the two men from the schooner?" I put in, with a shiver. Holy saints! If what Warner said was true—

"They landed on the island, Tim. After that their boat was carried off by the same agency that made off with the canoe and Malum. We are pretty certain that they are not wandering about the island. I have an idea where they are. Now as to Malum; it is impossible that the body and the canoe could have dropped out of sight by themselves. Remember we had to go through the rocks to get to the shore.

"What happened is this. Somebody else was waiting for the canoe, hidden in the rocks. While we were nearing the shore the others pulled the canoe out of the water and slipped back into the bush in another direction among the rocks. That was why I followed them, in the hope of catching up before they got clear. As it was, we missed them, without even a clue as to where they take their burdens."

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"But we haven't seen a human being on the island," I objected. "Where could these people hide? And what is their business on the island, especially if no one ever leaves it alive?"

Warner hesitated a second before replying.

"The men on the island hardly expect to leave it alive, Tim," he explained thoughtfully. "You see somebody has to carry the bodies that come here from the shore and prepare them for the *Amil* house. There must be a corps of attendants here, a kind of grave-digging fraternity that have kept out of our sight. They may be individuals who have been sent here in canoes and failed to die. I don't know. You are a deep-water sailor, Tim, and you haven't seen the signs that were visible to me.

"When you went into the bush last night for food I saw the grass wave a little distance from you, and when we ran here I came across a creeper that was still shaking from the passage of another man. There is no doubt but we are watched, every minute. I know the superstition of these natives, and it's a good bet that they'll never let us escape to reveal the location of their burial-ground."

As I said, the heat was sickening, but when Warner had finished, my hands and limbs were cold with fear. What he said had the ring of truth in it, and I knew in my heart it was so.

"As for the other white men," went on Warner quietly, "they must have already fallen into the clutches of the caretakers of the dead. Probably, dead or alive, they are hidden somewhere on the island. And there is only one place where such a hiding-place can be. Malum was carried there in his canoe."

"You mean the lava formations around the base of the crater?" said I, pointing to the nest of lava rock that formed a labyrinth near the *Amil* house. "A dozen boats' crews could hide there in the caverns and not be found in a week's search."

"That is what I meant," assented Warner. "You see, Tim, the bodies that come here have to be prepared for the *Amil* house. They must be dried out in the sun, or something of the kind, first. That takes place, most likely, in the lava labyrinth. And there we may find the men from the *Hephæstus* tonight."

I sprang to my feet and steadied myself against a tree for my knees were shaking.

"Do you mean," I cried, "that you would go into that place to look for two dead men? Man, it's crazy you are—clean crazy. Why it's running into an open grave, and worse. The men you are looking for have been on the island four days. There's not one chance in a thousand they're still alive."

"I am going to take that thousandth chance, Tim," said Warner steadily. "But I can't ask you to. Your best plan is to wait until dark and then creep down through the bush to the shore where you can watch out for a boat from the *Wasp*. With good luck you may get free yet."

I looked up at the gray slope of the crater where the lava labyrinth was, with its ghastly secret, and I felt nothing could make me go back there.

"It's a useless risk, sir," I urged. "Even if the men are alive, how can you get them out of there, not to consider getting free of the island? You'd only stir up the—the grave-diggers, and that would mean——"

"No more than at present, Tim," he said. "I must go up there tonight because I can not leave the men from the *Hephæstus* to such a fate. Because one of them—I know by the schooner and the papers I found in his cabin—lying in the lava chambers is my brother, Ned. The schooner is his—he is accustomed to haunt these out-of-the-way places on account of his being a cripple. I must try to reach him, if he is still alive."

IV

AS IT HAPPENED, we didn't do as Warner had planned that night. Because an hour after nightfall it began to rain. If you've never been out in a New Hebrides rainstorm you can't imagine the condition of the island that night. The palms and plantains gave no protection against the deluge which swept through the foliage in solid sheets of water, turning the ground into rushing streams.

Of course it was useless to try to find our way anywhere. All we could do was to move off a way in the bush, so as to get away from where we were when the rain started—owing to the fact that others on the island might have traced us to that point. If the rain hindered us from moving, it also protected us against attack, for we were securely hidden in the downfall.

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Warner's state of mind must have been terrible, for to the best of our knowledge his crippled brother lay somewhere in the lava rocks, if not already dead, in a dying condition. Every hour that passed brought his death nearer. For that matter it did the same for us. And we could do nothing.

The curtain of chill rain made sleep impossible and Warner and I sat huddled together in the grass until streaks of daylight showed and the sun warmed us out as the rain ceased. Then we both dropped off, too exhausted to keep awake any longer. We must have slept in a kind of stupor until late in the afternoon, when a sudden noise wakened me.

I sat up as quickly as my stiff body would let me, and brushed the sweat out of my eyes—for the heat had us again in its grip, after the chill of the night, and a hot fever was running in my veins. I listened and heard the sound repeated—a dull boom that came at regular intervals. It came from the general direction of Ambrym, as nearly as I could figure, and I scrambled to my feet, trying to peer out through the curtain of foliage that shut off my view. When I got a glimpse of the sea and the other island, I saw what it was.

The village of Ambrym was visible, and in the offing was the *Wasp*. As I watched, little puffs of smoke issued from the guns on the fore and after decks, and after a few seconds the reports would drift to my ears. Spurts of flame and smoke showed where the shells were taking effect among the huts of the village.

The village of Ambrym was being bombarded by the gunboat, and my heart sank as I realized the reason. The bombardment was a punishment for our loss, which the old man must have laid at the door of the village.

It gave me no satisfaction to see the smoke curling up from the fires which started in the huts. King Naumali was being punished for his crime in abandoning us on the Island of Changing Shapes, but it was poor consolation to see our deaths being avenged when we were still alive and kicking within sight of the proceedings. If only one of our boats would put off to the Island of Changing Shapes!

A moment's thought convinced me of the truth of the matter. King Naumali and his people held the secret of the island too dear to sacrifice for their own safety. Probably they were convinced that if white men invaded the Island of Changing Shapes some terrible punishment would be visited on themselves. Anyway, they kept mum about what had happened to us, and suffered the destruction of the village instead.

Our fate was decided by it, for it meant that the search of the *Wasp* for us was over, and after the village was reduced to ashes our shipmates would steam away with heavy hearts, convinced that we had met foul play at the hands of King Naumali.

That was just what happened. When we saw the gunboat veer, and swing away toward us after a farewell salvo, I roused Warner from his heavy sleep and informed him of what had happened. The two of us raced down to a point where we could see the gunboat pass. On the beach we snatched off our shirts and the officer's coat and waved them wildly to attract attention. But the vessel passed us a good two miles out, and our efforts were not noticed.

When I saw what was happening I flung away my shirt and shouted madly. It might have been a whisper for all the good that it did. No voice could carry that distance. The *Wasp* passed us at half speed and disappeared to the east, leaving us to the tender mercies of the *Amil* house, and its invisible attendants.

As long as I could see the ship I cursed it, with the bitterness of death already in my throat, until Warner stopped me. He was in a bad way himself, weak from lack of food and the heat. But he buttoned up his coat smartly, and drew me back into the bush a way where we might escape the observation of our enemies. It was a good thing he resumed his jacket, for before we had gone many paces I sighted something that looked like a long thorn sticking to the white duck and pulled it out gingerly.

It was not a thorn but a tiny arrow as long as a man's forearm, winged with a pigeon's feather and tipped with a narrow point that had a coat of red, waxy substance.

"Poisoned," I whispered, showing it to him. "Your coat kept it from touching you."

"Then it must have been fired from a distance," he said wearily. "Shows our friends of the *Amil* house are about ready to receive us. This is their first summons."

He took the arrow and scanned it thoughtfully. I sat down, being too weak

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to stand. When you come right down to it, it's nerve force that gives you strength, and when you take hope away from a man you take away his nerve and muscles. The departure of the gunboat did that for me. All along I'd been hoping somehow that they would come over to the island after us. Now that that chance was gone, I knew how heavily I'd been banking on it. Warner's glance traveled from the arrow to me and back again. He was hard hit by the event, too. There were blue circles under his eyes, and his face showed white under a three days' growth of beard. After all, the officer was only a kid, and he had the loss of his brother to face, while I only had my own big carcass to think about.

HOW long we rested there, I don't know, but presently Warner threw away the arrow and turned to me. And I was surprised to see that there was a fleck of color in his cheeks.

"Look here, Tim," he whispered, "we're not going to sit by and have those beggars make skeletons of us for their burial place. Another night and we'll each have one of those arrows sticking into us, and that will be the end. Are you game to start something?"

"No," said I, "there's nothing we can do. The gunboat's left us, like the dirty, stinking swabs——"

"Stow that, McGonigle!" snapped he, "and listen to what I've got to tell you. There is a chance, a long shot, and we're going to make the most of it. But if it's going to succeed you've got to obey orders. I count on you to do that."

I shrugged my shoulders. He was crazy to think we could get away from the Island of Changing Shapes. If there had been any hope I'd have grasped at it, for I was plain desperate. But there was nothing—except the maddening heat, the buzz of insects in the bush, and the forest of green lush that pressed in on us, hiding the invisible assassins with their poison.

"This is what I want you to do," he went on. "I am going to leave you. After I've been gone about an hour you are to go out of the bush, across the plain to the *Amil* house. Go slowly, and keep in plain sight of the crater. If nothing happens when you reach the building, push on into the lava labyrinth, keeping as much in view of the crater as you can. Remember to go slowly. Don't run or dodge, as you value your life. And keep on the top of the rocks, once you get into them. Is that clear? And I want your cartridge belt, with all the ammunition you have got."

"As clear as ——," I snarled, without looking up. "And you don't get my belt."

"It's our one chance, McGonigle," he said.

"Chance? Aye, it's a chance for me to stroll up that hill into the hands of them devils while you hide safe in the bush," I told him. "Because the heat's made you batty isn't any reason for me going into purgatory of my own accord. Do you think I'd go to the *Amil* place again after I saw the blind eyes of a thousand dead looking into mine?"

"You'll go," he said, "because I order you to. Moreover you'll follow out my instructions to the letter."

"We're a step away from death here," I answered, with the fear of the invisible in my heart, and a glance over my shoulder into the bush where nothing stirred, "and you're no longer an officer. I'll do as I like——"

"Will you obey my orders, McGonigle?"

"I'll see you damned first," said I, and settled back against the ground, for the fever was eating into me.

It was true what I'd said; that we were two men face to face with death of a kind to turn your stomach, and his officer's rank counted for nothing in the fix we were in. When I said that, however, I'd counted without Warner's heritage. He was only a kid, half my age; still he'd had the officer's creed bred into him, it was in his blood, and he could never put himself on the level of an enlisted man. What he did took me by surprise. He came over and caught me by the shoulder and thrust his face within a foot of mine.

"You'll obey orders McGonigle," he snarled, and his fingers cut into my flesh, for the youngster was sizable and strong.

"I will not," I told him.

The next instant he was letting out a string of cold, blasting malediction that was enough to make me fight to a finish in ordinary circumstances. He began by calling me a coward, and he gave me a description of myself that included all my twenty years in the service and my rank as bo'sun and painted me as a filthy deck sweeping that a misbegotten eunuch wouldn't spit

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on. Oh, it was a royal tongue-lashing he handed me, and little by little it began to get under the crust of my fear and weakness. It was the officer's spirit that did it—a kid telling me, Tim McGonigle, things like that and giving me the full benefit of his royal anger. It got me, finally, and I answered back in kind.

Maybe I'd have hit him, but even then I kept my hands off him. He let me say what I had to say, looking kind of white. When I had finished he said:

"Are you going to obey orders?"

"I'll do as you want me to," I told him, drunk with anger, "and may the sight of it teach you that I'm no coward."

"Then give me your cartridge belt, you are better off without it," he answered. I took it off and flung it at him, and watched him strap it on over his own. Then he went over his instructions again, and disappeared into the bush.

For a full hour by the sun I remained where I was, alone in the green wilderness. My anger cooled off a little, but when the time came to go out to the open I started off as Warner had advised, to the *Amil* house, and the gathering of the dead. Strong as ever was the fear of the place, but stronger still was the anger bred in me by the words of Chip Warner who had called me to my face things that no other man had dared to say.

V

IT WAS mid-afternoon when I arrived at the shadow of the *Amil* house and paused outside the door. I had come across the plain without observing anything living stirring. There was hardly a breath of air and the sun-baked gray lava footing was burning to the touch. The smell, as I neared the structure, assailed me with its dry menace.

I stood once more in the center aisle of the place of the dead. The sun, slanting to the west, came in the door behind me, and illumined the rows of bodies ranged on either side, glowing on the form of the gold beetle at the farther end. The place was just as I had seen it before, the shell eyes staring at me, the white skulls glimmering under tufts of hair, and the clay arms grasping spears and other weapons. Near me I noted a figure that held a sheaf of arrows identical with the one that had lodged in Warner's coat, and I guessed at the source of the supply. An arsenal of poisoned weapons was here in the *Amil* house in the hands of the dead.

With a shudder I thought of the fat form of Malum, and wondered whether it would be long before he joined the silent concourse. By the time he was put in place Warner, his brother and I would be candidates for a choice location.

Afraid? Well, I had been under the shadow of fear for two days and nights, and I had come to a state where one place was as bad as another. Also, the fever was gaining strength in me with the heat and I felt a spell of dizzy lightness.

It was then that I heard the chant of the *multars* for the first time. I was scanning the huge expanse of the building, wondering whether anything living was in it except myself, when I heard a low murmur of sound that seemed to rise from the ranks of the dead. None of the figures moved, but the murmur swelled to a loud hum and began a kind of chant that seemed familiar to me. It was the chant of the natives who had paddled King Naumali's canoe away from the Island of Changing Shapes.

My hair rose in ridges along the back of my neck as the chant became more distinct. It came in a kind of rhythm, like the drumbeat of the Ambrym people. Every now and then it rose into a wail. I was sure that the source of the sound was the dead bodies, but I could see no movement, and the only sound that came to my ears was the chant.

Were the dead forms singing in mockery of my invasion of their residence? The chant paralyzed me, coming as it did, and I staggered back to the door. The rhythm of it followed me out into the open, and into the lava formation at the foot of the mountain.

It was not from Warner's orders that I ran there, but from blind panic. The chant had been too much for me, and I was running from a fear that overmastered me. But I didn't go far.

The ridges of gray lava closed in around me, forming long gullies, one leading into another through which I ran haphazard. I hadn't penetrated more than a hundred yards when I knew that I was pursued.

Shouts and yells echoed behind me, and looking over my shoulder I caught sight of little brown figures that slipped and climbed

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past the rocks in my tracks. Presently they were all around me, seemingly coming from the lava itself, a mob of small figures that danced and ran beside me.

The men who had surrounded me were natives, only extraordinarily thin and emaciated. They wore no clothing but a rag about the hips, and their hair hung down to their shoulders in an unkempt mass. Their bodies were scarred, and several were lame. They were in a state of great excitement, shrieking and pushing one another to get closer to me. After a while I saw that they were guiding me in a certain direction through the labyrinth.

There was nothing to do but go along with them. I was too weak to try to break through the mass and I had no weapon. Moreover I saw arrows of a familiar kind in the grasp of several and I guessed that any attempt on my part to resist would be unhealthy. So I drifted with the brown flood while the racket increased until we came out into a clear space of some size, when it ceased abruptly.

The brown figures who had been running before me dropped back, and I saw that I was in a circular chamber in the lava walls which extended to the height of a man on all sides, the only entrance being the one by which we had come. In the center of this space lay a white man, and beside him a crutch. I saw that I had come to the crippled brother of Chip Warner.

He had propped himself up on one elbow to watch us, and on his drawn face there was an expression of complete surprise. There was something of Chip's set of the jaw, and alert eyes about him, only his face was heavier and marked by sorrow.

"Hullo," he said weakly, "where did you come from? I hardly expected any visitors in my sanctum at this late hour. You are a Navy man—is there a warship near here?"

It was pitiful to see the flash of hope that came into his eyes and then faded as I answered.

"There was one," said I gloomily, "it left here this afternoon, leaving two of us stranded on this island. You are Warner, of the schooner, aren't you?"

He nodded, and I sat down by him. Now that the first surprise at seeing me had died away, he relapsed into blank silence, which I shared until he looked up and muttered.

"You are being inspected, Bo's'n—Doctor-Man Maribara Torai has come out of his den to see the second white man the *multars* have brought him in four days."

At that I glanced up, and sure enough, a tall man was standing on the lava wall watching us. I could see him distinctly against the glow of the sunset. He was an old man with white hair, richly dressed in strings of cowrie shells, with an image of the golden beetle instead of the usual half-moon of shells hung around his withered neck. He carried no weapon, but I did not figure him the less dangerous for that reason. His small eyes flickered over me, and the cripple and he turned away to disappear into a cavern at one side. He was a different breed from the chattering throng that had brought me there.

"That's Doctor-Man Maribara Torai, chief of the *multars*," observed Warner. "He is the chap who will decide when you and I are enough of skeletons to mount in the *Amil* house—a process of death by starvation that may last for some time. I will be ready first, because I have several days' start of you."

FOR the first time I noticed that my companion was unnaturally thin and that his cheeks were sunken. It happened that some of the fruit and nuts we had been eating were still in my pockets and these I pulled out and gave to Warner. He wolfed them down, after a glance around to see if we were watched.

"Not that it matters," he explained ruefully, "a day or so doesn't matter to the *multars*, the burial people of Ambrym. We are helpless to escape from this place."

"We are not guarded," I whispered, with the fear of starvation in me, "and it would be easy to slip out the way I came in. Once in the bush we might not be found."

He shook his head.

"You don't know this place, Bo's'n. Schmidt—he was my mate who came with me—tried it, without telling me of his plan. Probably he thought it would be useless to take me, as I was crippled. The *multars* brought him back in an hour, with a poisoned arrow sticking into his back between the shoulder blades. He died in fifteen minutes. Then they took his body and chucked it down the crater."

Under my questions Warner revealed what had happened to him and his companion.

His curiosity had been aroused by hints

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that the garrulous Malum had dropped to him at Ambrym about the Island of Changing Shapes, and the *Amil* house. Warner had wanted to secure one of the bodies as a trophy, and had landed on the island five days ago for that purpose. Drawing the boat up on the sand the two men struck inland. They had no trouble in finding the structure they sought. While wandering through it and commenting on the golden beetle which is the symbol of the burial place—the Island of Changing Shapes—both were astounded to hear the chant issuing from the ranks of the dead.

Before they had recovered their wits, a dozen *multars* sprang from hiding behind the bodies where they had been responsible for the chant, and overpowered them, taking their rifles and bringing them to this spot before Doctor-Man Maribara Torai—Malum's name for him.

Warner had been able to communicate with the witch doctor through a kind of bastard Dutch that the other understood, and he learned the full purpose of the Island of Changing Shapes. It was, as Chip Warner had guessed, the burial-place of the near-by islands, which sent their dead to it in the small canoes. These were met by the *multars* who carried canoe and occupant before Torai in order that the witch doctor could determine by the dead man's trappings whether he should go with the headmen and high-caste bodies in the *Amil* house, or be cast down the volcano crater with the nondescripts.

The ranks of the *multars* who prepared the bodies for the *Amil* house, were recruited from the unfortunates who sometimes survived the canoe trip to the island. Three or four times every year this happened and the men who survived were not allowed to return. If they reached the outer islands, by any chance, they were sent back again to the Island of Changing Shapes. No one had been known to leave the place alive, and no white men had heard of it.

Such was Warner's story and it left little hope of escape. In return, I told him of his brother, Chip, and how we had been tricked by King Naumali, with the destruction of the village of Ambrym.

"Hold on, Bo's'n," he checked me. "Did you say that Chip said there was a chance of getting away?"

"He said there was one chance," I admitted, "but he did not tell me what it was."

"Chip will make good his promise, if it is possible," mused Warner. "To think of Chip being here with me on the Island of Changing Shapes! It's a shame to drag the young 'un to death with us. It would be better if he make a try for it alone, without burdening himself with a lame man and one down with fever. However, Chip will not leave us as long as he's in the game, and since he has not been brought here, we can guess that he is still free. The *multars* are not likely to be deprived of their quarry long."

"Have you any idea," I asked, "what he meant when he said that there was a chance?"

"No," admitted Warner. He raised his head and listened. There was a commotion off among the lava gullies that drew nearer us. It was quite dark by now, and I couldn't see anything that went on. My companion, however, understood the meaning of the sounds which he followed attentively.

"The *multars* have some one," he whispered to me, "and they are coming this way for the ceremonial before Doctor-Man Maribara Torai. Soon the sacred fire will be lit—it has not been lighted for two days on account of the warship—and the witch doctor will pass judgment on the body. God grant that it is not Chip."

VI

IN THE dark around us forms were stirring, and the stars were blotted out from time to time as men passed around the circle of our prison. The commotion of the approaching *multars* was silenced as they came near the arena. I was aware that a large number of men grouped around us.

Presently the *multar* chant that had startled me in the *Amil* house struck my ears, with its drum-like cadence, reinforced this time by a wooden drum near the entrance to Torai's cavern, by the sound of it. Rising and falling with the hollow sound of the instrument, the song seemed to me like a funeral chant—which I guess it was, at that. Had the *multars* caught Warner and brought his body to Torai, or was the new arrival a native from Ambrym?

The cripple caught my arm, and I saw a

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torch come out of the cavern, carried by one of the attendants, who applied it to a pile of brush near the cavern. In a moment the flame had caught and the scene was lit up for us as the fire climbed higher. We saw the wooden drum with a native beating it in cadence to the song, the row of *multars* crowded about the circle of firelight, and the dark mouth of the cavern which was the home of Doctor-Man Maribara Torai. The stage was set for the ceremonial of the Island of Changing Shapes.

First, three of the *multars* carried forward a small canoe in which was a still figure, and I gave a sigh of relief that it wasn't Warner. This canoe they placed so that the full light of the fire flooded it, opposite the cavern. This done, they squatted down and took up the chant with the others, rocking back and forth in time.

"Look here," I whispered to the cripple, "the natives are all watching this party. Why can't we slip out by the entrance?"

His grip on my arm tightened.

"Not possible," he explained in a low tone. "Watchers there can see us clearly in the firelight. Here comes Torai, ready for the judgment."

Sure enough, the tall figure of the witch doctor emerged from the shadow and stepped close to the upright canoe. With folded arms he stared down at it. The chant quickened and grew wilder in tone. The cursed pounding of the wooden drum kept time with the throbbing of blood in my temples as fever mounted in me.

After a moment Doctor-Man Maribara Torai stepped to the canoe with its occupant and drew out what looked like a bundle of sticks. They were sheaves of arrows, which he inspected carefully and laid aside. The next object to claim his attention was the ditty bag of the dead man. From this Torai extracted a number of personal belongings—a clay pipe, a long stick used in betel-nut chewing, a charm in the form of a golden beetle, two knives, and finally a series of smooth, polished bits of pearl shell about the size of a silver dollar.

"Those are to show the number of his wives," whispered Warner to me. "If the body had been a chief like Naumali the wives would have been shipped along with it; apparently it is only a headman, and the disks were sent instead."

I counted the pieces of pearl shell. There were fifteen in all—a fair-sized number, probably, for a man under the rank of chief. Torai replaced the disks silently in the canoe, and seemed to inspect the trappings of the body for a while. We could see him finger the cowrie shells, and run his hand over the money belt. Then he held up a long, uncut ringlet of hair which fell over one ear.

"That means," explained Warner, drawing my attention to it, "that the dead man took a vow never to cut the strand of hair until he had settled a quarrel with some one. The fact that he is here seems to prove he missed out in his calculations, and his enemy must have killed him instead."

An expression of anger came over the lined face of the old witch doctor as he fingered the ringlet. It seemed to count against the body, as the money and wives had counted for it. The question of whether it should rest with the others in the *Amil* house or be cast into the crater was still unsettled, evidently.

Then the chant of the *multars* took on a triumphant note, and old Torai lifted a human head from the canoe. The skull was ancient, with the flesh dried and puckered, showing that it represented an old score. Two others followed, each being carefully scrutinized by the witch doctor. This was the last of the judgment, for the old man lifted his hand for silence; at the signal the *multars* ceased their singing and the drumbeats stopped, leaving an echo in my ears that was the song of the fever. Torai glanced around at the assembled throng, while their eyes followed him attentively. He touched the gold beetle on his chest and the brown shapes shivered. Evidently he was prepared to deliver his verdict.

Instead he remained fixed with his hand raised. The circle of crouched figures swayed, and a murmur swept through them that told of surprise. There was a moment of silence, broken only by the crackle of the big fire in the center of the gathering.

Into the circle of light, directly in front of the witch doctor, between him and the canoe stepped the figure of Chip Warner, his hat set jauntily over one ear, in his shirt sleeves, a large bundle wrapped up in his coat under one arm. His white uniform stood out clearly against the background of darkness and the assembled *multars*.

If it hadn't been for the gasp that came from the cripple at my side I would have thought the fever was playing me tricks.

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Actually, I could see a grin on the youngster's face as he confronted the crowd, and his eyes sought us out in the pit. I saw the flash of recognition that crossed his face as he caught sight of Ned Warner.

It was no delusion, after all. The ensign had walked into the gathering as calmly as if he had stepped off the deck of the *Wasp*. What was his purpose in coming here I had no idea, unless he had given up matters as a bad job and decided to join us to meet his fate with his brother. If that was so it meant our last chance was gone, and we, all three of us, would soon be carried before Torai for judgment like the form in the canoe.

Only we hadn't any wives or heads to our credit, so I supposed we'd be given to the crater of Mount Takiha—the channel of the dead—as Warner had told me. It didn't matter much to me what they did with us, but I cherished a hope that Torai would put us with the elect, and not into the discard. A man's vanity sticks by him, even when it's a matter of disposing of his corpse.

THE officer's eyes traveled around the assembly and came to rest on the witch doctor. He raised his free arm and started to speak, when Ned cut in.

"Hold on, Chip," he cried softly. "If you want to palaver with the head undertaker about our funeral, you'll have to do it through me. Torai there speaks no language but his own, which is a compound of Dutch and Malaitan, with some idioms of the Island of Changing Shapes thrown in."

"Right, Ned," retorted the ensign coolly. "Tell this gentleman for me that I am an officer from the bang-bang boat that is in these waters, and that I want to palaver with him on an important matter. Tell him that I am a big-gun chief on the boat, and that he is to listen to my gab with great attention. Phrase it any way you like, only get the idea into his head. Talk quick because we don't want to lose any time."

The cripple sensed the need in the other's words and he held back the questions which he was eager to put. Turning to Torai he began a string of unintelligible talk that was past my understanding. Torai seemed to understand it, though, for his glance traveled from us to Chip and back again. The first astonishment had faded from his crafty face, and his small eyes glinted shrewdly in the firelight. He responded to my panion in the same lingo with som more fluency.

"He says," interpreted the cripple, he appreciates your call and is ready to what you have to say, but that you sh bad taste in interrupting his judgment the golden beetle, which is his fetis angered. Is there any truth in that the warship——"

"The warship," replied Chip, "is prob fifty miles away by now. Say to the tleman with the white hair that the a of the golden beetle, powerful thoug may be, is as nothing compared to the a of the bang-bang boat from which I co This anger is aroused because he has white men prisoners on the Island of Cha ing Shapes."

The *multars* had settled back in th ranks, evidently awaiting the command the witch doctor. Maribara Torai scann Chip for a moment then retorted in a s ited manner to the cripple.

"Torai says that we came here of our o accord, and invaded the *tabu* of the A house which is in his special keeping Warner interpreted. "He sees no reas why, if we come to the burial-place, w should not be buried. It seems that th sacred beetle has never had such an insu offered it, and that our lives would be pa of the necessary punishment to appease it."

"Probably he doesn't believe in th golden-beetle stuff any more than we do," argued Chip. "Anyway, let's try him out. Say that I am landed on this island by the bang-bang boat which destroyed the village of Ambrym, and most of the people of King Naumali. Tell him that the bang-bang boat can shoot bullets through the air five times as far as a rifle will carry, and that the bullets explode with the force of a thousand devils when they hit anything. Ambrym was destroyed by us merely because a white man was taken prisoner. Much more severe will be the punishment of the Island of Changing Shapes, since he has threatened the death of two white men.

"Not a stick of the *Amil* house will be left standing, and Torai and his clan will be hunted by the devil-bullets into the furthest recess of the lava caverns. Tell him that this is the word of the chief of the bang-bang boat, sent by me. If he does not release us and allow us to leave the island in canoes, the Island of Changing Shapes will

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l waste from one end to the other. If es let us go, he will be allowed to re- here in peace."

en the cripple interpreted this, I ht there were signs of dismay among *ultars*. Probably before their intern- in the island, some of them had wit- d bombardments of villages by war- and the memory was not pleasant. the witch doctor only lengthened his smile as he answered.

e calls your bluff, Chip," replied the le gloomily. "He wants to know why, u bring a message from the bang-bang you and the other white man—Mc- gle—were spewed out of the canoe of Naumali two days ago, and hid in the for that time. He declares that a mes- er from such a power as the ship that e Ambrym disappear in flames should e with attendants and guns, not in rags ou have done. He doubts, even, if he illing to allow us the honor of reposing he *Amil* house, because we seem to be rior to King Naumali's men since the er brought us here against our will."

Tell him not to worry about disposing us, Ned," answered the ensign with a , "because he will never get the chance. morrow the bang-bang boat will come us, and if we are not given up at once— ight—the devil bullets will end Torai his people for good."

'Torai says," explained the cripple after interval, "that that is a lie. He saw with own eyes the bang-bang boat disappear t to sea today. If we were as cherished all that, why did the ship leave us on the and?"

I CAN tell you, by this time my hopes were about as high as the bottom of the crater where we'd robably be chucked in a few minutes. he ensign's bluff, plucky as it was, wasn't oing to turn a hair of Torai. The old sin- ier was no fool and he knew when he had us t his mercy. He was aware that no one would come to rescue us. As for getting out of the place by a sortie, it wasn't to be thought of, under the present circumstances.

First place, there was the fire lighting up all the lava beds for a thousand yards around; then there was the *multars* crowded around the fire, waiting for a chance to stick a poisoned arrow into us. Lastly, one of us was a cripple, and another was weak with fever. No, I couldn't see how Chip's play had gained us anything, except to end the uncertainty and perhaps to win us a quick death in the maw of the crater rather than a lingering one by starvation. I had given up hope.

Not so Chip. The ensign was actually grinning at us as if he enjoyed the party, though I saw his face was white, and his hands trembled.

"There's a chance left, Ned," he sang out, "and you, McGonigle, be ready to jump when I give the word. Don't ask me what we're going to do; we can't waste time in explaining. I have some more to say to Torai, Ned. Try him on a new tack. Tell him that we are white men, a breed that's never been in the *Amil* house, and that we wouldn't mix with the party there. We'd disturb the charm of the place and irritate the golden beetle awfully. It's not his business to bury white men, anyway, and it will cause him a lot of trouble if he does it. It will spoil the sacred atmosphere of the Island of Changing Shapes."

Torai considered this for a while, then he pointed to the crater above us with a skinny hand. The *multars* murmured approval.

"It's no go, Chip," informed Warner, "because Torai says we had better go down the crater, anyway, and as for letting us go because we are white men, the thing's not to be thought of. No natives have ever escaped from the Island of Changing Shapes, and to let a white man go would be to fly in the face of his sacred duty. He says killing Schmidt didn't bring on any bad luck, as far as he could see, and he's quite willing to take a chance with us after we are dead. Moreover that is going to be in a few minutes, because our time is about up."

"Tell Torai," retorted Chip, "that before anything of the kind can happen the devil bullets from the ship will be fired at him."

The old witch doctor's scarred face twisted into mockery as he heard this and he muttered something at us.

"It looks as if our time was getting shorter, Chip," said the cripple "Torai informs me that he is going to have the *multars* sing our burial-song, and if no devil bullets come at the end of the chant——"

"All right, Ned."

The grin faded from the officer's face as his eyes flickered over the assemblage. At a signal from Torai the circle of attendants struck up the low chant which I had heard

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in the *Amil* house. The drum began its monotonous beating, while the witch doctor took out an image of the golden beetle and began to mutter some kind of ritual. It was the first time I'd ever attended my own burial service and I thought a prayer was in order, but the cursed chant made anything of the kind impossible. Then I heard Chip's voice.

"They will have it," he said. Watch out, McGonigle."

He darted a glance around the enclosure as if to fix it in his mind. Then he heaved the bundle he had been holding under his arm, done up in his coat, into the fire. At the same instant he sprang down into the pit where the cripple and I were standing.

In a flash I knew what was in the bundle, and cursed my stupidity for not thinking of the rifle cartridges before. Two hundred rounds there were, between the two of us, and I had no doubt they were all in that bundle—two hundred high-power service cartridges.

"Duck!" I yelled to Ned in the instant before the fire got to the contents of the bundle.

I swept him to the ground with me in a heap, a few feet from where Chip lay, the force of the drop, some eight feet, having knocked him down.

The *multars* sprang to their feet, and several of them fitted arrows to the little bows they carried. The drum stopped its tattoo. But before an arrow could be launched the fire got to the cartridges.

There was a crash, a blaze of sparks and embers that shot away from the place where the fire had been for a hundred yards on every side. I heard bullets sing by over us, and the howls of the *multars* who had got no small portion of the bullets and red-hot embers among them, being grouped about the fire.

"Quick," whispered Chip as we got to our legs in the black murk. All that was left of the fire was a carpet of red embers that glowed all over the lava floor.

"Take my hand and come this way."

I caught his arm, and assisted the cripple with the other. Ned Warner hopped along on his crutch as fast as we could run. The howls of the injured crowd covered our retreat to the side of the pit away from where Chip had leaped down.

How we got from the edge of the pit to the bush is blurred in my memory, being touched with fever. We ran with the *multars* slipping through the labyrinth after us, hunting for us blindly in the gullies. After we had climbed out of the pit with each other's assistance we found ourselves headed into the network of ravines that formed the lava beds. It was Ned Warner who steered us in the way Chip wanted to go. The sailor followed his course by the stars, as he was familiar with them. The labyrinth, which had been such an obstacle to our escape a few moments before, was an aid under the cover of darkness for there were a hundred means of exit we might have taken.

Torches were produced from Torai's cave after a few moments, but they helped us as much as our pursuers, as they showed us the direction of the pit from which we had come. Added to that we had some ten minutes start before the *multars* could gather their wits enough to find out we were missing and take up the chase.

It was no easy matter, at that. Several times in the dark we fell into depressions in the lava and climbed out battered and bruised. Once one of our pursuers ran into us, coming the opposite way. A right uppercut from Chip settled him before he could get his arrows into action, and after that we met no more until we were clear of the labyrinth.

ONCE out in the open we were in more danger of discovery than before, especially as the cripple showed signs of giving out. Game he was, though, and stumbled along with our support on either side. The dread of the scene we had witnessed was heavy on the three of us, and we were putting the last of our strength into the effort to get clear of the place. It was Chip who showed us the way out again. The one way we could have left the Island of Changing Shapes before the *multars* hunted us down in the bush. I asked Chip where we were headed.

"Best to take a log and swim for the other island," I panted, laboring with my burden. "We can never make it, sir, but at least we'll be clear of this hell-hole and pointed for somewhere."

"Yes," agreed the cripple. "You two may make it, even against the current, but I can't swim. I'll stay here."

"No you won't, Ned," said Chip calmly. "You'll come with me for a change of

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clothes and a drink before we set a course after the gunboat. Then we'll all have a good dinner, with canned peaches for dessert, and I'll borrow one of your cigars before turning in. I'm dying for a smoke."

Well, to the cripple and me it looked like the officer had given way at last and gone foolish. He went on telling us how nice it would be to feel a good deck under our feet again, and how he needed a bath and a shave, and the way we could catch the *Wasp* at the next stopping place on the warship's schedule, which was an island not overfar from here. And us with a half-hundred naked devils trailing us, ready to settle us on sight. Oh, it was bitter to us to hear Chip going on like that, and laughing every now and then, as he repeated how he'd fooled Doctor-Man Maribara Torai and the rest of them.

The only consideration was that he'd taken us off to one side, away from the quarter near Ambrym where most of our pursuers would be sure to go. That was probably what protected us until we got down to the shore.

"I think we'll put off to the ship," said Chip with a chuckle, "before our friends of the burial ground take it into their heads to search this stretch of beach. Where's our gig? McGonigle, get your boat ready to put off."

The cripple and I were too dumfounded for words, but presently Ned found tongue to say,

"If there's a grain of sense in what you're talking, Chip, for God's sake come across with it. Every minute——"

"Right, Ned," said Chip, sobered. "Look out there."

We followed the direction of his arm as he pointed and both of us gave a cry. A dark bulk was drifting slowly by us a little distance from shore. We could make out the loom of a schooner's masts. The ship was barely moving, being carried by the current against the light wind that came from the east. There were no lights of any kind showing.

"Ready all?" cried Chip laughingly. "McGonigle, I want that gig."

"But," I said stupidly, "what the——"

"The *Hephæstus*, man, the *Hephæstus*," cried Ned, seeing light before I did.

"Broken loose from her anchorage during the fracas this afternoon over at Ambrym," amended Chip. "I have been watching the schooner's course for hours back on the crater top, while she made headway with the current against the winds. That was why I stalled old Torai so. I had to gain time for the schooner to breast the island before making a run for it. Come, Bo'sun, that gig—"

Well, the sight of that schooner drifting a couple of hundred yards offshore was like wine to me. It meant freedom and release from the dread of the Island of Changing Shapes.

The gig? Why, we stripped off our clothes, Chip and I, and the cripple we towed him between us, hanging onto his crutch. He couldn't swim, Ned couldn't, but you haven't followed my tale if you think he wasn't game.

We was just in time, at that. Barely had we lugged him on deck when Chip gave a shout and I saw a dozen figures plunge into the sea after us. The white foam we'd made swimming out, with the phosphorus-like bubbles had betrayed us to Maribara Torai and his men. They were after us, the whole pack swimming out. It was hot work for a minute. Ned jumped for the tiller, naked except for his crutch and yelled for Chip and me to cut the reefs on the mainsail. I still had my knife with me, and it was the work of a few seconds to free the sail, but it took us longer to find the halyards and run her up.

Under the lame man's shouted directions we rattled her up, while he hauled in the tackle. The schooner paid off a trifle as the sail went up, and the cripple was again at the tiller, nursing her around.

A glance over my shoulder showed me the glimmering spots where the swimmers were nearly out to us. It was nip and tuck, one way or the other. While Chip and I tore the skin off our hands wrestling up more canvas in the dark, the schooner slipped along a little faster in the water and the swimmers reached nearly to the stern.

"'Ware arrows!" cried Ned, and we dropped flat to the deck.

And then a puff of wind came that heeled the craft a trifle. That canvas cracked taut and strained, and I heard the ripple of the wash as we gathered way, and left the Island of Changing Shapes far behind with the enraged yells of the *multars* ringing in our ears.

That's all there was to it. As Chip had figured when we thought he was light-headed, we picked up the gunboat at the

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next port, and maybe they weren't glad to see us! The old man was all for going back and wiping the Island of Changing Shapes clean of its poison, but Chip had had enough of it. What he wanted was to get a deck under foot again and the tang of the open sea in his face, and those were my sentiments, too.

There was what you might call an afterword to it all. It was some days after we'd got free of the island, and Ned Warner was happy as could be with the folk on the gunboat, having sold his schooner and come with us. Chip sought me out on deck one day.

"McGonigle," said he, steady-like," I will give you a chance to settle your reckoning with me as soon as we can get shore leave together. On the Island of Changing Shapes I called you things you couldn't be expected to forget; the fact that I did it to rouse you up to the point where you would go up to the crater and its people and give me a chance to get up on the other side with the cartridges without being seen, doesn't alter the fact that you have a claim for a reckoning."

Square? That he was, and an officer through and through. Oh, we settled the reckoning the next shore leave. Probably you could say I settled it, for I paid for the last round of drinks we had together.

The Misfit Becomes Chaperon

by WILLIAM H. HAMBY

Author of "The Misfit Turns Banker," "The Misfit Learns the Vinegar Business," etc.

THE usual crowd of Indians, Mexicans, cowboys, old-timers—and other Americans, loafed on the depot platform awaiting the south-bound train at Espanada, New Mexico.

Apart from the rest, sitting on the end of a truck, was a travel-worn stranger—his shoes indicating the travel-worn look had not been acquired in Pullmans. He had thick hair, a little wavy at the ends, and brown eyes. His hands were locked around his right knee and he appeared tired. But there was a half sad, humorous look in his eyes as though he were puzzling over why—since he liked the world so well—the world did not like him.

Near the other end of the platform walked back and forth a precise little man with an artist's Vandyke and small black eyes that jumped from spot to spot with the alacrity of a jack-rabbit. But whichever way his eyes jumped they always came back to the dust-covered, road-tired stranger resting on the truck.

Directly he walked with cat-like caution down the platform, paused by the young man, and looking around to see that no one was in hearing, spoke in a low nervous tone:

"Are you looking for a job?"

"You bet," replied the stranger surveying him with a smile. The little man was dapper in spite of his careless khaki suit.

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"In fact," went on the young man with a crinkle around his brown eyes— "I have looked for a job so long, and so far, that I seem to have come to the end of the earth. Do you happen to know if there are any jobs beyond?"

The little man shrugged his shoulder impatiently. Plainly he was an artist—an artist in distress.

"I can give you temporary employment," he said, agitatedly, "but it will pay you well. I will give you ten dollars for one day's work."

"I'll take it," said the stranger eagerly, "if it is anything but murder. I might even take it at that if you'd let me pick certain brakemen that run on this line. What am I to do?"

"Meet a lady when this train comes in."

"You are very improvident," grinned the stranger. "You could have hired me to do a job of that sort for seventy cents a day. But say on—who and why?"

"She will be wearing a brown suit and, most likely, a hat with green leaves on it. Has gray eyes and light-colored hair; is about five feet five: nice-looking girl. Name's Miss Arnett.

"You see," he hurried on, "I was to meet her—and take her out to the ranch. The Pajarito Ranch. It is thirty miles west. Anybody can tell you the way."

He was extracting a ten-dollar bill from a folding bill-book. "That buggy and piebald horse hitched yonder to the telegraph-pole are mine. I will lend them to you. You can bring them back tomorrow."

"Just a little more information of a personal sort," said the young man holding the ten in his fingers and looking at it speculatively. "My name is Simplex Cox—I'm open and above board—I'm honest—I'm truthful—I'm faithful to my friends. In fact, it is hard to think of any good thing I am not.

"But I'm sort of tired of being a good thing for other people. Usually when a stranger comes up and slips me ten for some easy job, it's to keep himself from slipping into jail.

"Give me a little personal biography. Who are you? Where do you stay? Where'll I find you, if this thing does not work out favorably, and I desire a few minutes adverse interview with you?"

I'm Bolston, the painter," the little man snapped out. "My studio is two miles down here by the Black Mesa. This girl is merely a friend who has been away on a visit and I want to see that she is met and taken out home."

Simplex nodded.

"I'll see she gets home all right, and I'll bring the outfit back tomorrow."

Bolston shifted his light weight to his left foot and fingered a buttonhole of his khaki suit.

"Why—oh, say—I'm going East pretty soon—and won't really need that horse and buggy any more; only cost me $25.00—and I've had good wear out of them. If they will be any use to you—just keep them."

Simplex's brown eyes had lost some of their credulity in the last two years. He looked the painter chap steadily in the averted eye.

"Anything else you want to give me—a farm, or gold mine? Say, tell me more about this girl."

"I have got to go," Bolston shrugged his shoulder. "I've got to meet an Indian who is to pose for me——"

He hurried around the depot—the train was whistling. Simplex got up and walked to the end of the platform, and saw the dapper chap actually running toward a clump of piñon and scrub cedar.

"Well?" A tall, brown Westerner with the air of being amused at what the Lord had done to mankind's general intelligence was at Simplex's elbow.

"He strung you did he? Well, believe me, you've got one——of a job on your hands."

II

COX recognized the girl he was to meet before she got to the top step of the car—recognized her by the swift search her eyes made of the platform for her painter friend.

Simplex felt sorry for her—she was the sort of girl people always feel sorry for when she is disappointed.

"Miss Arnett?" He stepped up and reached for her suit-case with his right hand as he lifted his dust-colored soft hat.

"Yes." Her glances were still gliding here and there—hoping to find a belated painter hurrying to meet her.

"Mr. Bolston could not come," explained Simplex "and sent me to meet you."

Disappointment set her face quivering as

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though the soft pink cheeks had been cut with a switch.

"Now that's just too bad," she said, aggrievedly, as though a very nice plan had suddenly been spoiled.

"Yes, it is—for you and him."

At that her eyes came back from the search and tarried over Simplex. She had not noticed him before. His hair was thick and wavy—and his eyes a very sympathetic brown.

"Well," she sighed as though recovering slightly from the disappointment, "I always make the best of a bad situation."

"And I always make the worst of a good one," Simplex smiled. "So we ought to get along very well. Have you any other baggage?"

"No, this suit-case is all." She gave it to him and followed out to where the piebald pony and the cart stood.

As they drove away across the mesa, Simplex was thinking mostly of the remark the grinning cowman had made about this being a —— of a job. The bad part must be deeply concealed for it was decidedly pleasant on the surface.

He watched out of the corner of his eye, the pink in her cheeks, the lift of her eyebrow, the quick part of her lips. He decided after the first half-dozen exclamations that Nature in fashioning her head had taken smiling pains with her face, but had sort of loafed on the job of interior decorations.

She was not in any sense an intellectual Amazon, but she had brains enough to keep her laugh from sounding silly, and she knew how to use her eyes—and they were eyes that could go pretty nearly any length and bring in what they went after.

Besides, she was good-humored and sort of playful and Simplex liked her immediately.

A few miles out on the mesa as the pony jogged along through the scattering piñon and juniper and scrub cedar, Miss Arnett turned and looked full at Simplex as though examining him for the militia.

"You don't look much like Mr. Bolston," she remarked.

"Thanks," said Simplex dryly.

"I was just wondering," a pucker came in her forehead, "whether it will be safe for you to take me all the way home."

"You see," she sighed and shook her head, "Dad is something fierce when he is wrathy. He sent me off to the East because he didn't like Mr. Bolston. Dad sent word to him he'd kill him if he ever came across the line of his ranch again—and Dad's got five notches on his gun.

"I wonder," she opened her eyes wide—"if that's why Mr. Bolston did not meet me? I was supposed to stay at boarding-school all Winter, but ran away, and wired Mr. Bolston to meet me." Her eyes lost all their good-natured humor.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," Simplex said, dryly. It was clear to him now. The painter had been making love to this rancher's daughter and enjoying it, until danger loomed up—then he ducked and hired a wayfaring man—though not a fool—to take the job off his hands.

"Of course," the girl said judicially looking him over again, "if Dad waits until we get close, he'd see you are'nt Mr. Bolston. But sometimes—he doesn't wait that long—and he'll know this piebald horse a mile."

For the next hour Simplex recognized that the Westerner at the depot had used the right adjective for his job. Life was sweet even when he had no job—and to be shot at long range for an amorous painter with a Vandyke was not at all inviting.

"I think," suggested the girl as the road turned steeply down a cañon to climb as steeply out on the other side, "you better get out here and let me drive on alone. Dad's ranch begins at the top of that bluff across there."

"But how will I get the horse and buggy back?" asked Simplex.

"I'll send Tony, the Mexican, with it." She reached for the lines.

Simplex grinned and shook his head.

"No, thanks. I'll take a chance. I wouldn't think much of myself if I didn't take a chance for you."

She colored beautifully—not bashfully—and smiled at a very fetching angle.

"I hope if Dad doesn't kill you—that he likes you."

III

THE man with five notches on his gun was in front of his ranch-house when the girl and Simplex came in sight. The old man stood rather indifferently straight and watched the approaching rig. If Simplex felt nervous he did not betray it to Miss Arnett; but he did manage two or

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three pretexts for taking off his hat. He figured that nothing at long range would be so likely to convey to old man Arnett that he was not the painter, as this mop of thick dark hair. Bolston's was thin and light.

As they drew up in the yard, and stopped, old man Arnett came toward them in a loose-jointed casual walk. He had not said a word, but he was looking at his daughter in a way that made even that self-possessed young lady feel uncertain which way to jump.

Simplex was a pretty good judge of men and he got the measure of the ranchman in a brief glance. Arnett was tall and lean, and a little stoop-shouldered, and had a drooping apologetic gray mustache, and mild, slow-moving eyes. He was not a typical Westerner, but all the more dangerous for that.

There are no typical Westerners except those on the burlesque stage who wear yards of fringed chaps, and whole batteries of guns—and will run a mile at the sight of a rotten egg or a cabbage.

Arnett was the sort of fellow who, fifteen years ago, was probably raising turnips back in Indiana or Iowa until he had to kill his brother-in-law to keep him from moving a cross fence. Since then he had come West and had learned to recognize that he had such a mild disposition, the only way for him to get his rights was to stand up for them—and shoot.

"Well, Lura," he said mildly resting one foot on the hub of the front buggy wheel, "I see you are back."

"Yes, dad," said the girl catching her first breath of relief. "I just couldn't stand it there. They had cold mashed potatoes fried over for breakfast, and made me play on the piano four hours a day."

"I wouldn't stand for it either," said the old man solemnly. And then as though noticing Simplex for the first time——

"Light."

Simplex "Lit."

The old man called Tony, a black-haired, black-eyed Mexican, to take the horse. Cox caught a look in Tony's eye he didn't like—and made a shrewd guess that about every sort of male person on the ranch or in forty miles of it were in love with "Lura."

Arnett led the way into the house. It, too, was not one bit like the "typical" ranch-house of fancy and fiction. It had seventeen rooms, and about all the conveniences—and a lot more air—of an eight-dollar-a-day New York hotel.

A Mexican servant girl showed Simplex to a room as though he were an honored guest. He was puzzled. He did not know how to figure it out. He knew his clothes—particularly his shoes—looked like a tramp's. What did the old man take him for? He had seemingly not given him half a glance. Had asked no questions.

The obvious conclusion would have been that he was a hired livery driver—and should have been sent to the bunk-house of the hired help. Instead, he was being received as a guest.

It was dusk and no call had come for dinner. No one had come near, no one seemed to be in that part of the house.

Simplex had not lighted a lamp, but sat by the window in the half-light and watched the dull red and snowy white of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains twenty miles to the east.

There was an easy, shuffling step in the hall; the door opened, and old man Arnett came in. He closed the door cautiously behind him, and half-tiptoed across the room and drew a chair up near the young man's. He sat sort of humped-forward, slowly pulling the scraggly ends of his drooping mustache—and looked out of the window.

"I reckon," he said in a mild drawl, "Lura telegraphed that —— painter to meet her; and he hired you to take the job off his hands."

"You guess well, Mr. Arnett," said Simplex not at all at ease. He was wondering what was coming next.

It was a long time before anything came next. It was amazing to Simplex how any man could sit so still and pull his mustache and say nothing as long as this old rancher could. He was getting decidedly nervous about it, when Arnett remarked:

"I'm sorter glad you come. Want a job?"

"I want a job, Mr. Arnett," said Simplex with a sudden rebound of joy, "as bad as a fish wants water. I actually smother without a job."

"I reckon," mused the long, lean rancher in the dusk, "you are just about the feller for the place. I can see she likes you and still you are too bum-lookin' to be took serious."

"What is the job, Mr. Arnett?"

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The old man pulled at his mustache until a few brittle ends broke off:

"I want you to be company for Lura. She's one of these queer dad-blasted frivolous females that's always got to have a man of some sort hangin' around.

"It's about seven years too soon for her to marry and the galoots she's been goin' with lack about seven hands of measurin' up to the standard.

"Now I'm goin' to employ you to be her young man. You are to go with her everywhere she goes, and be company for her. You can keep her interested. But there ain't no danger of her gettin' stuck on you. I'll give you a hundred dollars a month and raise it every six months you keep her from gettin' married."

"I'll surely do my darndest to keep the preacher from a fee," said Simplex warmly.

This not only seemed like an unexpected gold mine; but it tickled his humor.

"There's just two conditions." Arnett had arisen and half slouched over the back of the chair. "You are to keep on wearin' the same clothes you got; and you ain't to let no man come near her."

"I can wear the clothes all right—as long as they hold together," said Simplex, "but how am I to keep men from coming near her?"

"I'll lend you a right pert gun," said Arnett simply.

"But supposing one of them shoots first?"

"Then," the old man pulled his mustache sadly—I'll get you the best metal coffin in Sante Fé—and ship the remains wherever you say."

IV

THE old rancher continued to lean loose-jointedly over the back of the chair, waiting for some comment from the young man.

Simplex watched the light grow dimmer and dimmer over the mesa, and fade into a filmy red mist over the Sangre De Cristo range. He was thinking of the enthusiasm with which he had become a school-teacher; entered the wholesale vinegar business, and started to learn banking: and all these jobs had faded—or worse—blown up. Then of the long, long search since in which his dollars had vanished one by one like scared coyotes, and left him footsore and jobless.

"Well, Mr. Arnett," Simplex arose resolutely, "all the other jobs that have been handed me as nice safe packages, have been loaded down with infernal machines. I'm going to reverse the process—and take your job, that is loaded to start with. When do I begin?"

"Now," said Arnett fetching a long sigh of relief. "Let's go down and eat—and you tell her somethin' interestin'. She's a little bit peeved just now over that painter bobcat not meetin' her—and she'll listen to you with both ears."

She did; and her eyes were bright and her laugh so appreciative that Simplex quit worrying about the girl—girls—he had left behind him.

"Holy smoke," he said to himself when he returned to his room—"but this is a lovely job! That sunbaked product of the desert who told me at the station I had a —— of a job, wouldn't know a field of daisies from a forest fire."

The next morning, as Simplex wanted to see the interesting places, Miss Arnett ordered Tony to saddle two horses.

Before they started old man Arnett slyly signaled Simplex to one side and slipped him a right energetic-looking revolver.

"Now you needn't be at all slow about usin' it," drawled Arnett, pulling off a few brittle ends of his drooping mustache. "I got a down-hill pull on the courts around here and I can get you out of any sort of shootin' scrape."

"Your experience has made you an expert," said Simplex a little sarcastically. It nettled him, the cool way in which the old man talked of his killing or being killed.

"Somewhat sorter," drawled Arnett, and leisurely slouched off toward the barns.

The gallop across the mesa in the brisk mountain air was stirring. It was stirring to be with Lura anyway.

Simplex was in the best of spirits—only hang it all, he wished he had on more decent clothes. But he put his hat on the saddle-horn and endeavored to hold the girl's attention to his most attractive features—his eyes and hair.

Directly he heard galloping behind—and looked back. It was Tony. He slowed up, supposing the Mexican was coming with some message. But instead, he drew up on the other side of the girl and began to smirk and twirl his black mustache, and say explosive things in Spanish. To which the girl replied also in Spanish smiling and

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nodding approval and gesturing as though graciously accepting some enthusiastic personal compliment.

Simplex perceived his early education had been badly neglected. Why had no one ever taught him Spanish? But his education the last twenty-four hours had been pretty thorough. He pulled his horse up, rode around to the Mexican's side—tapped him on the shoulder—and waved indefinitely across the mesa—

"Vamoose—scat!"

Tony glowered a moment like smoke from Dante's Inferno, bit his lip, spat out some Spanish word-like "Malediction"—and rode away. But the look he left in Simplex's mind, made him put his hand to his back to locate the exact ribs between which he would feel a knife sticking some dark night.

Miss Arnett said nothing, but looked at him out of the corners of her eyes, and puckered the corners of her mouth into a grin.

They rode down into the cañon and along a clamorous little stream lined with willows and cottonwood, and out of the cañon to the fenced mesa. An iron spike was driven into the face of the rock beside the road—and on it swung a leather pouch.

"What is that?" asked Simplex.

"Where people mail their letters," answered the girl. The stage passes here and takes the bag to the post-office at Espanada. And to illustrate she took four letters from the bosom of her middy blouse, rode up and slipped them into the leather pouch.

It was a glorious ride. They had lunch at a ranch-house and returned home about sundown. Nothing more had happened.

The next day they rode again. Six miles out where they turned a shoulder of the mesa and were hid from the ranch-house—a man sat his horse beside the road. At sight of them he gave a whoop of joy, swung his hat high in a wide circle and galloped toward them.

Even as he came, Simplex saw he had a man to deal with—a man that would grin in the face of a bobcat or kick a grizzly bear in the short ribs. Without paying the slightest attention to Simplex, the cowboy swooped down on Lura, shook her hand hard, held it tight and patted it with the other hand—and, still holding it, rode along beside her.

Simplex was embarrassed. He was, in fact, nonplussed. It seemed a little heartless to open fire on a happy man without giving him time to say his prayers.

He dropped back and called in a peremptory tone——

"Say, partner—I want to speak to you a minute."

The cowboy released the hand, visibly amazed. Stopped and turned his horse about. The girl rode steadily ahead.

"Notice my right hand," said Simplex in a low tone. "I've got you covered. Don't say anything to scare the girl. I haven't anything against you, my enthusiastic friend, but I've been detailed to see no man pursues the heiress yonder. I'm instructed to kill on sight. I'll do it too—for if I did not—old man Arnett would. Now you ride by me and straight on down the road."

The cowboy looked at Simplex steadily—looked at the pointed nose of that energetic revolver.

"Well, I'll be ——! That's just like old Arnett. Well, you've got one —— of a job on your hands—and I won't help you any by sending you there before your time—So long, son!"

V

"WHAT were you fellows quarreling about?" asked Miss Arnett when Simplex caught up with her.

"We weren't," replied the young man riding close alongside. "Merely passing a few remarks."

"Do you usually cover men with a gun when passing a few remarks?" she asked, casually.

"Did you see?" Simplex was troubled. He did not want her to know about his job. "It was just an old quarrel. We knew each other back in Texas. I had to cover him to keep him from fingering his own gun. I tried to keep it covered, for I didn't want to alarm you."

She laughed, and her cheeks were flushed as with pleasure. She looked sideways at Simplex and said banteringly—

"You are interesting. You might also be good-looking if you had some clothes."

"I might also be rich if I had some money," retorted the young man.

"Has Dad said anything to you about any of the young men around here?" she questioned pointedly.

"Your father, so far as I have been able to observe, is a right reticent person," evaded

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Simplex. "He seems to make only two or three remarks a week."

"He isn't talkative," agreed Lura. "I suppose I take after Aunt Belle. She says something about everything that comes along—and talks in between while she's waiting to think of something else."

"It isn't a bad habit," said Simplex, "if there is brains back of it."

"A complexion in front of it, you mean," caught up the girl. "A man doesn't care anything about brains. He wishes a woman would shed her tongue as soon as she does her complexion."

Simplex's eyes lighted with astonished admiration.

"Who would have thought it?" he grinned. "Or did you merely hear it somewhere? You aren't right, but it sounds smart."

"You know," continued Lura reflectively, "Dad thinks because every man I see falls in love with me, that I fall in love with them. But I don't. I can always fix my mind on the mole at the side of a fellow's nose, notice his ears—or his feet—and keep from falling in love with him."

Simplex squirmed in the saddle. His feet were his sore point—both figuratively and shoeleatherly.

"It isn't a bit hard," continued the girl, "to keep from falling in love with a fellow who doesn't look good. Brains are all right, but a spot of grease under the eye, or a collar riding up the back of the neck, can make them look plumb silly."

"Say," gasped Simplex, "what are you—a philosopher in disguise or merely a flirt?"

"Merely a flirt," she dimpled and looked at him demurely. "But, believe me, a flirt knows more than all the philosophers that ever sat on a tub. A philosopher can talk about a man all day; but a flirt can make a man talk about himself all day and night."

Simplex rode along puzzling over this outbreak. Had he been fooled about her brains after all? She certainly did not talk like a simpleton—when she really talked. And maybe she was not as pliable and mild as she appeared.

Directly he noticed she was looking down at the side of the horse at the holes in his shoes. He tried to hide the shoe behind the heavy stirrup.

She laughed:

"Vain man—I'm not trying to keep from falling in love with you."

Simplex's face grew hot. He was plagued—vexed—peeved. He rode on glumly serious for several miles.

She turned her horse about directly.

"You are not used to riding. I don't want you to get too tired, for tomorrow we are going to ride a long way."

The rest of the day, Simplex loafed about the house or visited with the cowboys and laborers around the barns. Old man Arnett passed him occasionally without seeming to notice him. He did not seem to notice anybody, unless he had something for them to do. He asked his daughter's body-guard no questions, and, apparently, expected no reports.

The next morning Cox was called when the first pink glow showed on the fourteen-thousand-foot snowcap of the Jicarita. Breakfast was waiting downstairs. He and Lura ate alone, served by the Mexican maid.

Twenty minutes later, while the light was still a soft blur over the mesa, they galloped away, both in great spirits. Simplex carried behind his saddle a roll that he guessed contained food and a coffee-pot and a frying-pan.

"We are going to the Rito Del Rio Cañon," she remarked. "It is thirty miles—and we want a good day ahead of us."

She did not talk very much, they rode mostly in silence.

When the glow of the morning sunlight fell on the red mesa, and the yellow blooms of the grease-wood danced before a south wind, and the earth clear up to the topmost layer of blue sky seemed aquiver with color, Simplex turned to the girl. Her face seemed softer, fuller of emotion—an eager expectant wistfulness in her eyes. She was looking ahead—and unconsciously plied the quirt to her pony, already in a swift gallop.

Simplex checked whatever he started to say and fell to wondering.

"Did you ever notice," said the girl directly, still in a brooding happy mood—"how big little things count?"

"Yes—red ants for instance, when you are setting on a sand hill."

"Do you know," still pursuing her own thought, "that character, and brains and money and family and all, don't count—that—" she vigorously snapped her finger in the air—"with a girl, against the big thing she wants?"

"What is that?"

"To be loved in the way she wants to be loved," she answered.

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Simplex began to see light. He also began to get uneasy, and reached back to see if his gun was properly available. All this tended to something and it looked like something serious. His job was at stake, and he guessed that the girl was going to try to persuade him to lose his job for her sake.

He might do that; but he would be hanged if he lost it for any man's sake—any of these worthless scalawags, at any rate. He knew if she was in love with a man—the man was worthless. Must be!

They rode into the cañon at ten o'clock. It was narrow—the bluff of tufa, perforated with the ancient caves of the cliff-dwellers, rose above a rushing little creek. The narrow strip between the path and the other bluff was covered with tall pines, whose bark glowed yellow; and along the stream were cottonwood and red willows.

"There he is," suddenly exclaimed the girl, her eyes and cheeks and whole figure suddenly quickening with excitement. She pointed ahead and struck the pony a sharp cut. Down the cañon from behind a big rock, Simplex saw smoke arising.

VI

SIMPLEX knew instinctively that the camp-fire was Bolston's, and that this meeting had been prearranged by him and the girl. And he set his jaw grimly, and again felt to see if his revolver was handy.

When they were a hundred yards from the fire, the painter saw them and waved his hat in the air, and hopped up and down jubilantly.

"Miss Arnett," Simplex had kept his horse close abreast of hers, and reached out and laid his hand on her arm—"will you do me a favor?"

"Why—yes," she pulled up her pony—"I suppose so. What is it?"

"I want you to wait here until I ride on and talk with Mr. Bolston a few minutes. I've got a little matter to discuss with him—and I'd like to do it privately."

Her eyes studied him a moment. Her lips showed signs of anger for an instant, and then relaxed into a teasing sort of smile.

"You'll be careful and not let him hurt you?" she said.

"Very." Simplex's tone was sarcastic.

"All right," she nodded. "Go ahead but don't be long." She crossed her right leg over the horn of her saddle, and gave the pony the rein so he could pick at the scattering blades of wild grass.

Simplex rode up and jumped off his pony.

"Oh, ho," said Bolston recognizing him—"It is you, my good man, is it? Glad to see you. The old man gave you a job, did he?"

"Glad to see you once more," Simplex put a menacing emphasis on the last two words. "I wanted to thank you for giving me the chance to be shot in your place."

The painter laughed, a forced ladylike laugh. "You must not take any stock in those stories. Old man Arnett is as gentle as a lamb and is a good friend of mine."

"So am I," said Simplex—"the same sort of a friend." He was pretty sure he had Bolston sized up right—but he wanted to be positive. If the girl really loved him—and the fellow was any account—Simplex preferred to lose his job rather than spoil things. But he believed Bolston was a worthless cad, with a streak of yellow as wide as the bluff.

"By the way," Simplex looked him hard in the eye and took a step nearer, "you know I've been tryin' to remember where I saw you before."

Bolston backed two steps, and pinched his Vandyked chin with thumb and forefinger.

"No, my good man—you never saw me before that day I gave you employment at the station."

Simplex nodded emphatically——

"Oh, yes, I have. I begin to get you now—sure! Why, you worthless cur, you are no painter!"

"No painter?" Bolston really looked wild and alarmed now.

"No—you are a piker——"

"I tell you," protested the little man vehemently, "you know nothing of me. You never saw me before."

Simplex knew he had not seen him before; but saw from Bolston's alarm his theory was right. He was a fake, and was courting the rich ranchman's daughter either with dishonorable intentions not to marry her, or dishonorable intentions to marry her.

"Why," said Simplex aggressively, "you are no more of a painter than a bear's foot. You couldn't paint a barn so a cow would know it.

"Now, I'm employed by Mr. Arnett to see you don't annoy his daughter. In some ways, I'd like to shoot you." Simplex drew his gun—and Bolston went wildly backward

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until he collided with the face of the rock. "But in the long run, I imagine I'd sleep better at nights if I don't mess up the cañon with your watery blood. Hit the trail and hit it fast."

Bolston had edged away from the rock and began backing toward where his horse was hitched; keeping his face to the gun, but glancing from time to time over his shoulder like a nervous chauffeur to see he did not run over anything.

"Don't point that gun toward me," he begged—holding his hands in front of him—"I'll go—I'll go." He was fairly ghostly with fright.

It was fifty yards to where the horse was hitched and Bolston kept up a great torrent of expostulations and pleadings and warnings. Simplex kept both his eyes and his gun on him in an undivided way—so closely, in fact, he had not looked behind.

Just as Bolston reached for his saddle-horn, Simplex heard a quick decisive command behind him:

"Hands up!"

He turned and looked straight into the muzzle of as ugly a gun as the one he carried—and back of the gun blazed a pair of dark blue eyes—as dangerous as old man Arnett's ever were.

The knowledge that she was the daughter of a gunman was not necessary for Simplex to know safety lay in quick obedience.

"Drop the gun," was the next command. He had hoisted his hands still holding the gun.

The gun dropped.

For a moment Miss Arnett gazed at him with blazing wrath. She was all the angrier because Bolston had shown no signs of resistance.

She was evidently thinking what to do with Simplex and as she debated it her eyes strayed to the cliff across the creek.

The rock rose, strata upon strata, leaving ledges here and there. Two hundred and fifty feet up was a wide ledge where archeologists had been reconstructing a cliff-dweller's kiva. They had reached it by rude ladders—one up to the first ledge: the path zigzagging along the most accessible part of the bluff—and then another ladder—and so on, up to the last ledge which was fifty feet of perpendicular rock. Up the face of this was a good ladder.

"March!" ordered the girl pointing to the path that led across the creek to the beginning of the climb.

It was stiff work, but the girl, still holding her revolver, followed within twenty feet of Simplex all the way.

At the last ledge she stood at the foot of the fifty-foot ladder until he was safely on the top. Turning to Bolston who had tagged on behind, she ordered—

"Now pull that ladder down."

The painter did, with much heaving and puffing.

Simplex was leaning over the edge of the ledge—looking down in a fury.

"Make yourself at home, mister policeman."

The girl waved her hand to him now in airy good humor; then turned and took Bolston's hand and started back down the steep climb to the bottom of the cañon.

Thirty minutes later, standing on the edge looking down two hundred and fifty feet to the little creek and the jagged rocks, Simplex heard a merry laugh—two merry laughs.

With the lunch equipment in their hands—walking very close together, Miss Arnett and Bolston were disappearing around a corner of the bluff two hundred yards down the cañon.

"This job," said Simplex savagely, "is —— !"

VII

SIMPLEX was mad. The more he thought of it the madder he got. To be driven up a ladder by a girl—and trapped on this ledge two hundred and fifty feet above the path down which the girl and that heinous fraud laughed as they walked away with the dinner—and his job.

It was such a good job too. A hundred dollars a month and board and horses—with no work but to interest a pretty girl. Well, the job was gone. The condition on which it was to continue had been violated. He would quit that night. And it was all on account of that miserable little varmint with a Vandyke; that fake painter, that fraud, that *papier-mâché* man!

"Well —" Simplex ground his teeth and kicked a loose rock crashing over the cliff—"well, something is going to happen before this is over."

In a little while the young man was hunting systematically for a way to make something happen—anyway. The first job—the impossible one, it seemed, was to get

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down off this ledge. After a careful search in which several times he lay flat on his stomach and stuck his head over the precipice to scan the face of the rock, he discovered a series of projections and cracks angling down from one corner of the ledge.

There were signs that at one time—possibly in the cliff-dweller's day, these had been used as steps for human feet. More investigation, and he convinced himself that at no very distant date some hardy archeologist had climbed down that way.

Simplex was mad enough, and disgusted with himself enough, and thirsted for revenge strong enough to make the most dangerous of attempts.

Holding to a secure part of the ledge he let his feet down carefully until they rested on the first projection—five feet below. He tested it, and it held. Then cautiously he lowered himself until his hands got a firm grip on another narrow ledge three feet below.

Again he let down his feet, and slowly felt about until they touched a projecting piece of rock. It was tufa, soft volcanic rock, and when he let down more weight, it cracked off and gave him a jolt that almost loosened his hold on the rock above. He was dangling now with his feet in the air.

For a moment, panic struck him. The jagged rocks two hundred and fifty feet below would take no stock of his thirst for revenge, his love of life. He could not hold on long.

Slowly he edged sideways, still feeling cautiously with his toes for some foothold. At last, they found a crack in the rock—and a secure footing.

It took a half hour of the dizziest and most painful work to climb down the fifty feet to where a path ran along a second ledge—upon which the ladder had been thrown by Bolston.

Simplex made quick work getting down the remaining ladders and hurried to his horse. Just what he intended to do was not clear yet. The first thought that had come to him was to get the three horses away—so the conspirators would be on foot and at his mercy.

But when he came to the tarpaulin, which had been on the back of his saddle, rolled up on the ground near Bolston's fire that they had left, he stopped to investigate.

It contained no grub. They had taken all that. But among the other things which they had left behind was the one above all others he wanted—his gun.

Simplex changed his plan. He would not bother the horses. Instead he would slip down to where they were cooking their dinner and get the drop on them. Then the things he would do to that—that—miserable imitation of a man— Well, Simplex was still mad and he used right violent threats to himself.

He followed the path between the face of the cliff and the roaring little creek; stopping every few rods to listen and peer ahead. He did not want any slip in this plan.

The sun was not shining now. The air took on the sudden coolness that comes in cañons, when a swift mountain storm is ready to break.

And it came swifter than he expected. Before he was in sight of the girl and Bolston, the swift dash of rain struck him and sent him hurrying under a sheltering ledge. The rain was cold—and in a moment hailstones were mingled with the driving water.

Above the roar, Simplex heard a squeal, and running feet. He looked about hurriedly for a place to hide. At the back of the ledge was one of the little round caves of the cliff-dwellers—a small dark concave room in the rock, with a two-foot hole for entrance.

He scuttled into that, just as Bolston and Lura came under the ledge, gasping and laughing.

The hail increased. The wind whooped down the cañon and drove it like grapeshot against the face of the rocks above.

IN THE deep shadow of the cave-dweller's home, Simplex sat near the door. Bolston and Miss Arnett had stopped not ten feet away and stood watching the storm.

"Oh," she exclaimed suddenly and grabbed his arm. "There's no shelter over that ledge. Mr. Cox will be killed!"

"*Mister* Cox!" he sneered. "Since when have tramps been mistered?"

"What you call him doesn't matter," said the girl a little touchily, "it is what is happening to him. I wouldn't want a tarantula up on that cliff in this storm."

"That's what he is—a spider," spat Bolston venomously. "I don't care how hard he is pelted."

"But he'll be killed," replied the girl in distress.

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"Well, let him," savagely. "I'm not going to be killed trying to get him down. You couldn't, anyway, in this storm."

"No, I suppose not," said Lura Arnett.

The hail lasted only twenty minutes—and the cloud began to break.

The girl and Bolston walked out from under the ledge and looked at the clouds.

"I'm afraid it has put out our fire and spoiled our dinner," said Bolston.

"I'm afraid Mr. Cox is killed," she said, repentantly.

"Oh, mister, the devil," snapped Bolston. "A tramp is used to all sorts of weather."

"Well," said Lura, "you go and put the ladder up so he can get down while I go back and start our fire again and get the dinner going."

Bolston put his hands in his pockets and stood tapping his left foot with his right heel like a sulky boy.

"Oh, let's don't spoil everything by letting that bum down now. He'll keep all right."

"No." The tone was decisive and old man Arnett's daughter could be right positive in her tone. "You go and let him down now."

Bolston shrugged his shoulders together as though trying to hug his short neck with them. He hated to admit he was afraid—but danger was danger.

"See here," he blurted, "if I go up there and let him down, how do I know he won't kill me?"

"You don't," said the girl. "But that is your affair. Now run along. He has no gun and he won't bite." She turned and went down the path toward the camp-fire as though she fully expected to be obeyed.

Bolston shifted from foot to foot, took a few steps toward the creek, looked at the clouds, swallowed, looked up stream and down—and finally with a doubtful shrug started off toward the ladders.

Simplex stepped out, hopped from stone to stone across the creek and dodged into the pines on the other bank.

Keeping safely concealed he followed at a distance until Bolston climbed the first ladder to the ledge that ran fifty yards along the cliff to the next rise. Then Simplex made a quick dodge across the creek and got to the foot of the ladder where he was concealed.

He followed up, staying just one climb behind. There were two ladders, then notched steps up the third cliff, then the final fifty-foot ladder which had been thrown down to trap Cox.

Simplex climbed the step cautiously keeping his head ducked close to the rock. When his head was on a level with the last ledge he peeked over.

Bolston was standing looking up to the top cliff, nervously clenching and unclenching his fists.

"I'll be —— if I let that catamount down," he said aloud. But glancing downstream to see if the girl was in sight, he apparently changed his mind.

"Oh ho—my man!" he shouted up the rocks. There was no reply.

"Oh, say you!" he called again.

Still everything above was painfully quiet.

"Oh, ho, my good man!" he shouted again propitiatingly. Then under his breath—"You —— bum, I'd like to leave you up there to rot."

Not being able to negotiate terms over the edge of the rock, he painfully and gingerly got the long ladder up and with much grunting and swearing hoisted it a yard at a time, until the end reached the top of the cliff.

"Now, you stinking rotten egg," he shook his fist at the top of the cliff, "you can come down—or stay up there and freeze for all I care. Ta ta."

And with a wave of braggadocio at the imagined enemy above, he whirled around and started for the steps.

He stopped so still the chatter of his teeth were audible. He was looking into the face of the maddest-looking revolver he ever saw—and the "rotten egg" was climbing up behind it.

"Ho, my good man," said Simplex mockingly, "skin up that ladder now while I count fifty."

BOLSTON went up that ladder and tarried not on the manner of his going. He climbed so fast, that he tripped over the last rung and fell sprawling on the cliff.

Simplex gave the ladder a yank and threw it sprawling along the path.

"Now stay up there until you starve, you wart on the desert," called Cox savagely, and started down the climb to the bottom of the cañon.

Once or twice when he paused for breath,

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he looked up and grinned to see the precise little fraud, ranting up and down the cliff within about four feet of the edge, shaking his fist first at the heavens and next at his disappearing enemy.

Simplex got Bolston's horse and hid him in the pine woods at the mouth of an arroyo that opened into the cañon; then took the other two and rode down the cañon toward the camp-fire where the girl was reviving dinner for the painter—who was destined, perhaps predestined, to be absent.

He hitched the horses in the pines, and crossed the creek to where the girl was busy with the rekindled fire and the frying bacon. She did not see him until he was within fifteen feet of her.

"Well!" Lura's face was a study in consternation—anger—and disgust when she straightened up and saw it was Simplex and not Bolston. But Simplex was glad to see that disgust over the painter's failure was predominant.

"Well?" Simplex echoed with a smile that had more force than flattery in it.

"Where is the painter?" Miss Arnett tried to speak naturally.

"There isn't any. Hasn't been. If you refer to that Vandyked toad—he has been eliminated. He is off the horizon."

"You didn't—you haven't—killed him!" Lura was a little pale. She did not feel a bit sure of this unaccountable young man.

"I am sorry to say not. I merely removed him from temptation. Don't worry any more. Hurry with the dinner—we are going home."

"Don't you talk to me like that!" she blazed with wrath he would not have suspected. "Who made you my guardian?"

"Nobody," answered Simplex sadly. "Your father tried to—but failed. I've lost my job."

"I should say you have," she snapped. "If he does not discharge you when we get home, I'll kill you."

"Why not have Tony do it, and save trouble?" he suggested.

For a moment she stood biting her lip until he expected to see blood run from under her teeth.

"Miss Arnett," Simplex remarked with deliberate positiveness, "you need a guardian. Need one badly. But I'm not suited for the job—I like you too well. You need somebody that would tie you up in a dark room and feed you bread and water until you came to your senses. Don't you know enough to let men like that little viper of a Bolston alone? You are a plain —— fool."

With that her temper—the explosive part of old Arnett's temper—flashed up. She dropped the frying bacon into the fire, ran to where her wraps lay on a rock, grabbed up her revolver and aimed it at the young man.

Simplex never flinched. He felt too miserable to care much what happened.

"Shoot," he said, indifferently. "You are just the sort of a fool to shoot your best friend and marry your worst enemy."

The revolver wavered and went down.

Snatching up her wraps, she bolted toward the creek, her head held high, her face blazing. Straight for her horse she went, unfastened the lariat, leaped into the saddle and galloped up the path at a break-neck speed—bound for home.

Simplex smiled; the smile deepened into a chuckle, and broke into a rollicking laugh. It was exactly the thing above all others he wished she would do. Now he had a free hand.

He rescued enough bacon and beans and bread for a square meal, and sat by the fire until thoroughly warmed.

The clouds were threatening again, and he decided to let Bolston down and go home.

AS HE hitched his horse across the creek from the ladders he heard a blood-curdling screech. Running out to the open, he saw the painter clinging to the face of the cliff.

The fellow, in his desperation, had tried to climb down the same way Simplex had, and losing his nerve, was clinging and yelling wildly for help.

Simplex cut the lariat from his saddle-horn, and ran for the ladders. When in shouting distance he called to Bolston to hold on.

He made the climb in an incredibly short time—for he was scared, desperately scared. Bolston was in a critical situation—no doubt of it. If his hold slipped, or his strength gave way, it was a sheer drop of two hundred and fifty feet—and rocks below.

"Now hold steady," he called over the edge of the cliff as he climbed up, "and I'll have you safe in a moment."

It took, it seemed, an interminable time, but in reality only two minutes, for Simplex to find a secure hold around a rock for one end of his lariat. He leaned over the cliff

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and let the other end down to Bolston, less than ten feet below.

"Now let go with your right hand and get a firm grip on the rope. Then catch hold with both hands and I'll pull you up."

But Bolston's nerve was entirely gone. He was in the most abject panic; and by no persuasion or cajoling or abuse could Simplex get him to let go with one hand long enough to grasp the rope.

There was only one thing to do. Go down after him.

Simplex tied the rope around his own waist and climbed very cautiously down the face of the cliff until he was opposite and a little below the frightened fellow.

He found a comparatively secure footing and holding on to the rock by his left hand, untied the rope with his right from his own waist in order to tie it around Bolston.

Whether in anger or sheer craziness, Simplex never knew, but without a moment's warning, the fellow removed his left foot from the crevice of the rock and gave Simplex a vicious kick in the mouth.

Cox's left hand slipp'd on the projecting rock, he reeled back until his feet barely held; everything grew dark—and for one instant, there was not an ounce of balance between Simplex and death.

He brought himself to with heroic swiftness—clung desperately with his left hand until he could find a hold with his right, and reestablish his footing.

When he was again firmly secure he was spitting blood by the mouthfuls.

"You —— fool," he got out between blood, "I've a good notion to let you drop."

But he was not. He managed to climb two feet higher, and tied the rope securely around Bolston's waist.

As Simplex climbed back to the top holding both to the rope and projections from the ledge, the fellow wailed—

"Oh, for the Lord's sake let go that rope. It'll break, it'll break and I'll be killed."

"You ought to be," said Simplex savagely, "but you won't."

Back on top the ledge, Simplex got hold of the rope, securely braced himself and called——

"Now let go."

"I won't, I won't," wailed Bolston, "the rope will break—I'll be killed."

"Well, I'll be ——" and Simplex sat down completely nonplussed. He had heard of fellows losing their nerve on a steep mountain or the edge of a cliff before—but he never had thought of it robbing them of every particle of sense.

The clouds were gathering again—the wind swirled down the cañon with a colder chill than before. A few heavy spats of rain beat on the cliff. It looked like another hail.

"Oh, come on, now Bolston," persuaded Simplex, "I tried that rope, it would hold an elephant. It is going to storm again—and we must get down from here."

But Bolston—almost blind with exhaustion, arms aching and feet cramping, whimpered and whined and held on.

"Well, hold there until you drop—you blasted fool," said Simplex in utter exasperation.

The storm broke—and hail came like shot from a battery. It beat on the head and face of the hapless limpet clinging to the face of the rock; beat on his bare knuckles until the fingers were bruised—and at last in utter exhaustion—his hold slipped and he dropped two feet until the rope caught him.

As he fell he let out one long blood-curdling yell.

Simplex got hold of the rope and drew him up to safety. He shook him and punched him until he had recovered from the cold.

"Now come on," Simplex said, "Let's get down from here."

But to his surprise—and horror—Bolston sat flat on a rock and clung to it with both hands.

"I won't go down that laddder, I won't! I won't!—I can't! I'll fall!"

"That finishes me," said Simplex in utter bewilderment. It would be impossible to forcibly carry him, fighting, panic-stricken, down the precarious ladders.

"Well," he said in vast disgust. "It's up to you. I'm going home. You can stay here and hug that rock until you starve—or you can climb down when you get ready. Your horse is hitched just around there—at the mouth of that arroyo."

IT WAS nine o'clock when Simplex got in. He dismounted at the horse barn and started to unsaddle his pony. A crunch of gravel made him look over his shoulder—and not three jumps away was a dark figure slipping on him from behind. It was Tony with a knife.

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"Back up." Simplex came around with drawn gun so quick Tony jumped backward instead of forward.

"Hit the line for those mountains," Simplex pointed through the starlight toward the Sangre De Cristo range twenty miles away. "If you are not pretty far gone before daylight, your soul will be in purgatory before noon. Hit it up faster," he ordered as the Mexican started off in a dog trot.

"Well, this seems to be my day at home," said Simplex. "I wonder who will be the next caller."

The Mexican servant girl had supper still waiting for him—a rather solicitous supper.

"Not hungry just now, Maria—thanks," he said. "But I wish you would tell Señor Arnett to come up to my room directly."

He came in a few minutes. Simplex had lighted a lamp and stretched relaxed in a rocking-chair.

The old ranchman sat down on the edge of a straight chair, and slumped over with his elbow on his left knee and pulled at his long drooping mustache.

"I quit tonight," said Simplex. "I didn't make good. That painter was with her two hours today."

"Is that so," said Arnett matter-of-factly.

"Yes," said Simplex, "I don't fit the job—and it really might in time give a fellow the headache to have to be watching behind himself all the time. If you don't mind, have one of the fellows hitch up that piebald pony of mine to the buggy and I'll start for Espanada in about forty minutes."

"All right." Arnetta rose—and started for the door.

"Say," remarked Simplex. "Maybe tomorrow you better have one of the boys ride over to the Rito Cañon—and look on that ledge and see if there is a —— fool still sitting on a rock and holding it with both hands. I left that painter up there too scared to climb down the ladder."

Old man Arnett lingered in the doorway a moment. Then he reached for his hip pocket and took out a wallet.

"Sort of hate to see you go," he said, mournfully, "but don't want to keep a fellow after he's dissatisfied with his job. But you've done a mighty good month's work." He handed Simplex a one-hundred-dollar bill.

"Well, I'll be ——," said Simplex after Arnett was gone to order his horse and buggy.

The piebald pony attached to the rickety buggy was led up to the side of the house.

Simplex went down. It was out into an uncertain world again—hunting a job. He was awfully blue over going. He was leaving so many enemies behind. It was too bad he had the row with the girl. But that one-hundred-dollar bill was a comfort.

As he got into the rickety seat and took the lines—a window above went up and the girl's head came out.

For a moment in the starlight she fluttered a handkerchief down at him and then very softly—

"Good-by, dear."

"Well, I'll be ——," Simplex again repeated as he drove off across the mesa.

"She isn't such a fool after all! I believe I'll come back some time."

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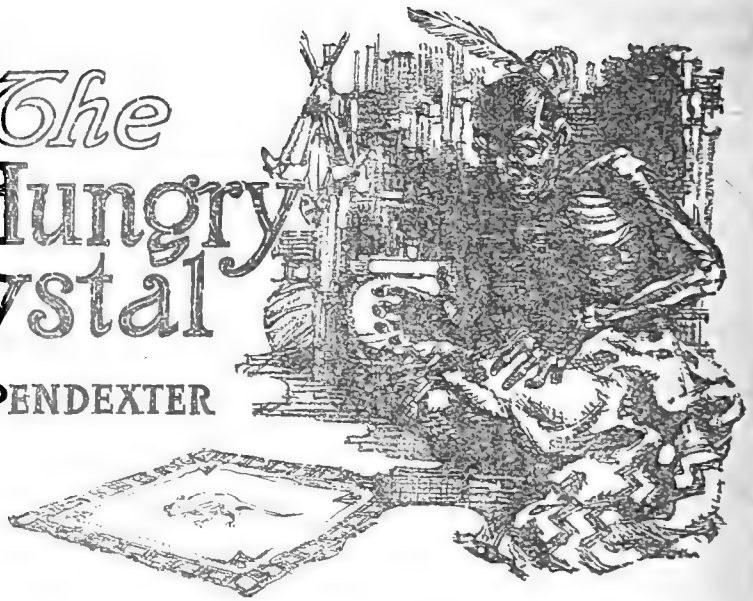
The Hungry Crystal



by HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "A Bearer of Belts," "Kinnikinnick," etc.

BENSON, the hunter, was leg-weary after his fifty-mile jaunt from the little English settlement on Wild Grape Creek, an affluent of the Tennessee. Although known among the Indians as Galagina—Male Deer—because of his success in hunting that animal, his trip had been unsuccessful. His failure irritated him, as deer were usually very plentiful in this year of grace, 1758, in the American colonies of his Gracious Majesty, George III.

His spirits revived, however, on beholding the Cherokee village ahead. No Indian nation, with the possible exception of the mighty Iroquois league in the North, was destined to play a more important part in the history of what was to be the United States of America than this redoubtable tribe of the Southland.

In another year they would be striking at the settlers in Carolina and committed to a warfare against the colonies which was to continue without cessation almost to the threshold of the new century. But none of this grim business cast a shadow over Benson's meditations as he hastened forward.

Behind the village rose the western flanks of the Cumberlands, well known to the hunter. In the Kentucky country, to the north, deer surely could be found in abundance, but the hunter would have none of that region, although familiar with the war trails as far as the Ohio; for it was debatable land, and red and white ventured there at the risk of life. Benson was confident the young men of the village would know of nearer and less hazardous hunting grounds, and as he had enjoyed the hospitality of this particular tribe more than once, he pressed forward eagerly.

Then a strange thing happened to him; as he struck the outskirts of the village he experienced an emotion of fear. He knew it was absurd, in view of the friendly relations between the Cherokee nation and the whites. He sought to attribute the foolish fancy to overstrung nerves, but reason told him his nerves were as steady as the mountain range between him and the Virginia country. His premonition in exciting fear in no way lessened his courage. Nor was there anything tangible on which to base his secret alarm.

Warriors greeted him courteously; the women smiled, for he was a favorite in the village. Yet a subtle sixth sense, perhaps borrowed from the wild, shy things he hunted, urged him to turn back. He smiled grimly at the impulse; for if there was danger there was but one way to meet it—face to face.

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MID-WAY through the village he encountered the young war chief, Aganstata, of Ani-wa-ya, clan of the Wolf and powerful above all other clans. The chief gravely motioned to a bark house he was to occupy during his sojourn in the village, and then passed on with head bowed.

Appreciating the Indian nature Benson found nothing in the fashion of the chief's greeting to substantiate his own strange unrest. It was a part of the host's idea of hospitality to wait till the guest had eaten and rested before conversing with him. Still the chief's silence and moody abstraction fitted in with the hunter's half-formed suspicions.

His weather-beaten face, however, revealed none of his thoughts as he entered the house and seated himself on the grass mat and waited for food. He ate heartily of what was placed before him and from the tail of his eye studied the comely young woman who had brought the food. He thought he detected a hint of uneasiness in her bearing.

Suddenly he said—

"The Corn Flower is sad."

The girl darted a lightning glance from her black eyes, then the immobile mask settled down and her face was blank. Ignoring her silence he lighted his pipe and puffed it meditatively. When she brought him a gourd of water he continued:

"Many warriors are here. I see men of the Deer and Bird and Paint clans from over the mountains. A hunting party?"

"They come not to hunt," she murmured. "But they are not painted for the war-trail."

Again the mask slipped a trifle, this time as she gazed through the open door. Benson shifted his position and felt his skin crawl as he beheld the repelling figure of a tall man painted jet black, with the bones of his anatomy, even to the skull bones, picked out in white. At a distance this combination of graphite and gypsum made him look a skeleton. His gaze rested but a moment on the occupants of the bark house, but Corn Flower seemed to feel its impact as though it had been scorching flame, and the gourd she was removing from the mat, slipped from her hands.

"A new mystery-man," commented the hunter, craning his neck and now noting the newcomer carried a small grass box extended in his right hand before him.

"He is a great sorcerer," she muttered, stepping to the door but seemingly loath to leave.

"He is from a clan over the mountains," hazarded Benson.

She shrunk back as several men, painted black, hurried by to overtake their master. Speaking in a whisper, more as if thinking aloud than to give him information, she said—

"Dead Sorcerer, of the Ani-saha-ni clan."

Benson gripped his nerves. The border was filled with queer stories about the Dead Sorcerer, but he had never met a white who had seen him. He believed the mystery man's presence accounted for the electric thrill of impending evil he had sensed on entering the village. Now he understood the peculiar deportment of the girl. She was filled with terror.

"The Dead Sorcerer comes to work a spell for my brother Aganstata," he said in an even voice.

"He carries the box," she murmured.

"What is in the box?"

"A mouse."

"What will the medicine of the mouse do?"

"An evil spirit is to be driven away."

"Then you have lost warriors."

"We have lost no warriors."

"The corn is spoiled."

"The corn is tall and strong," she muttered, edging again toward the door.

He waited, knowing it was useless to ask *the* question. She passed to the door and glanced out to make sure the coast was clear—then shot back at him:

"The White Crystal is hungry. The hunters bring in no deer."

She darted away and Benson was left alone to mull over her words. He knew the White Crystal must be a clan fetish; but appreciating the Indian use of symbolic language he did not know whether to take her other words literally, or seek a hidden meaning in them. His own failure to find deer to the south induced him to accept her speech at face value. He began to wish himself away from the village, although as yet he could not detect any personal menace.

The village was deeply stirred. The absence of deer from the usual hunting grounds was not sufficient to account for the somber atmosphere of the place. There was other game in plenty. It was the coming of the Dead Sorcerer that caused the

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girl to tremble and warriors to walk with bowed heads. The sorcerer was the head of a dark priesthood, and now he had come to remove the spell he would assume complete control of the village. Even Aganstata could not stand against him. Fear of the supernatural would rule the village till he had made the medicine which would bring back the deer.

The hunter knew the Cherokee mind as well, perhaps, as it was permitted any white man of his time to know it; and this knowledge permitted him to realize none but an Indian could fathom the twists and turns of the Indian mentality.

His instinct of self-preservation was now warning him he stood in great peril, but his acquaintance with the Indian character had taught him a show of fear would be the very means of centering upon himself some deadly animus that was as yet but half formed, possibly wholly nebulous. His bearing was bold and confident as he strolled through the village to the house of Aganstata.

The chief met him at the door but did not invite him to enter, an act of omission the hunter was quick to note. Benson changed none in demeanor although he knew the chief knew he was wondering what this slackening of hospitality portended.

"My brother, the Groundhog, is troubled," said Benson bluntly.

"The sun shines. The birds sing. The corn is in tassel," replied the chief.

"The Ani-saha-ni sends its mystery man to help you," continued Benson.

For an instant a wild light flickered in the chief's eyes.

"My hunters find no deer. The sorcerer will tell me my dream. Then the deer will come back, Galagina."

"The white man's magic already sees that," boldly informed Benson. "The deer will come back when your hunters have traveled to the north. They will bring the blood of the deer and the White Crystal will be fed."

Aganstata's gaze burned into the hunter's steady countenance for fully a minute. Then with a return of his imperturbability he muttered:

"Who shall say your magic is good, except the Dead Sorcerer? White magic for the white man, red for the red; it is so recorded in the wampum."

Benson nodded carelessly and turned away, his apprehensions closing down like a cloud of mist. An idea was growing up in the superstitious chief's mind. Already it had poisoned the atmosphere of the entire village and had resulted in the coming of the dreaded sorcerer; for dreaded he was even by those who invoked his aid.

"Galagina will watch the ceremony of the Dead Sorcerer in the council-house and perhaps will help him with his white magic," the chief called after him.

Although Benson nodded carelessly a chill encysted his heart. The chief did not preface his name with the usual words, "My brother." The suggestion that white magic might mingle with red was an irony, possibly tipped with death. The invitation was in reality a command. The hunter was ordered to repair to the long, bark council-house.

As he retraced his steps he observed the village already was under the law of the sorcerer. The latter's attendants, painted black but showing no white markings, were picketing the hem of the clearing to turn back any who might seek to leave. Benson saw a woman stopped and directed to return. As she drew near with lagging step he recognized her as Corn Flower, and there was no misreading the terrible fear which weighted her steps.

"Wanted to git away from something 'bout to happen," soliloquized Benson.

THE younger warriors, together with the women and children, were crowded about the entrance of the council-house. Benson boldly pushed his way inside where the elders and visitors were assembled and seated himself between a man of the Wolf Clan and one of the Deer clan. The latter, Benson decided, was worked up to a high pitch of fear or excitement.

This was sensed rather than read in the man's physical deportment, which was stoical enough. The hunter wondered if belonging to the Deer clan would invite blame for the disappearance of that animal. Then his gaze shifted and remained fixed on the Dead Sorcerer, who was crouching before a small grass mat.

The sorcerer was the focal point of all eyes. His cloak had slipped down to his loins to reveal his hideously painted form. Before him and receiving his absorbed attention was the small grass box. As Benson

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watched there came a movement at the opening, and Aganstata entered and seated himself opposite the mystery-man. As he did so the sorcerer suddenly opened the box and shook out on the mat a tiny wood-mouse with white feet. It remained where it fell, inanimate and seemingly dead.

The sorcerer lifted his head and spoke across the mat, asking—

"Are you ready, my brother?"

"I am ready," came the calm reply.

Dead Sorcerer slowly turned his white and black skull, the white areas around his eyes cunningly painted so as to cause them to appear bony sockets, and ranged his gaze up and down the lines of warriors. Benson saw there was none who wished to invite that traveling glance to linger by encountering it. He, himself, felt a queer qualm as the smoldering eyes halted for a moment on his brown face.

Some evil was to be removed from the village. A trouble-maker was to be eliminated. The "ordeal of the mouse" was the medium selected for the discovery of the malign influence. Benson's hand stole to his belt and loosened the light ax. This ordeal was particularly offensive to the hunter, inasmuch as it permitted too much power to the sorcerer.

He would call the people of the village by name, one by one, and by studying the movements of the mouse as each name was pronounced would pretend to discover the person whose medicine had driven the deer away. Benson had heard strange stories of mystery-men hypnotizing animals. He knew motion in the apparently dead mouse depended on the tone and quality of voice the sorcerer might choose to assume.

Dead Sorcerer raised his hand, and began:

"Brothers, for three moons no deer have been found by our hunters within many days' travel of the village of Aganstata. Till three moons ago they were as plentiful as the trees. For three moons the White Crystal has not drunk of the blood of the deer. It is pale and weak. It cries for food. It must be fed, or all game will follow the deer, the crops will not ripen, and bushes will grow where now stands the village of Aganstata. I have asked my little brother, the white-footed mouse, to tell me who has put this evil upon the clan of the Wolf—Little Brother, are you ready?"

The tiny creature kicked its frail legs and settled down on its belly. Again the sorcerer's ominous gaze swept the assemblage, and Benson's forehead grew sticky with sweat under his light fur hat as for the second time he met the baleful stare.

"Aganstata!" suddenly exclaimed the sorcerer, bending low and studying the mouse with tense attention. The mouse remained motionless, and the war chief jerked up his head as though relieved of a heavy weight. The Ordeal of the Mouse was conclusive evidence against any and all, be he high or low, chief or warrior, man, woman or child.

There rapidly followed the names of lesser warriors, the little animal showing no signs of life. The calling of each name was accompanied by the straightening of a tawny back along the double circle. The sorcerer next recited the names of the young men; and still the mouse refused to pronounce sentence.

The sorcerer paused and brooded deeply; then commenced a roll call of the women. Benson experienced a deep sensation of relief. His name had been omitted, evidencing he was not reckoned in with the suspects. The names of the women proceeded monotonously and the mouse displayed no animation. Again the sorcerer halted and for a minute stared fixedly at the little creature; then slowly commenced on the names of the children.

The hunter responded to the awful horror of it. He knew a victim would be selected before the ordeal was finished, and only the children were left to supply the victim. A mighty anger burned up in his heart, and he told himself that some time he should kill the sorcerer. But name after name fell from the sorcerer's lips with no response from the mouse.

For the third time the sorcerer ceased speaking, having canvassed the entire village. Benson was amazed, for he knew the wizard's reputation was at stake. The warriors stole questioning glances at each other. Finally Dead Sorcerer sonorously announced:

"The village is clean, my little brother tells me. There is no evil in any who *lives* in this village of the Wolf."

Instantly all eyes were turned on the flushed face of the hunter. Without diverting his gaze from the mat, Dead Sorcerer continued:

"But there are outsiders who come here at times and call Aganstata 'Brother.'

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They shall be tried by the mouse that we may know them to be true brothers. I call the name of the white hunter—Galagina!"

The name was shot out like the crack of a whip. It was scarcely pronounced before Benson realized how appropriate his Cherokee appellative was if it were destined he should be blamed—sacrificed—for the departure of the deer. Every eye swung towards "The Male Deer" and then back to the mat. The mouse wriggled convulsively and sought to escape, crawling toward the hunter.

"My little brother has spoken!" hoarsely cried Dead Sorcerer; and instantly Benson was seized by the warriors on his right and left.

BENSON had simulated fear almost to the point of physical paralysis. The two painted attendants who had him in charge half carried, half dragged him up the rocky slope. They came to a halt when the smoky torch held by the sorcerer revealed the black opening of a cave. About the hunter's neck was a rope of grass, tied in a slip-noose. His hands were securely bound behind his back. Dead Sorcerer took the neck rope and motioned for his assistants to withdraw; then clutching the hunter by the shoulder he urged him into the cave.

The cave was small and obviously used for ceremonial purposes as the bones of animals littered the floor. Behind it were other chambers, more vast and gloomy. The sorcerer pushed Benson down against a boulder and secured the end of the neck rope around a splintered point of stone.

Satisfying himself his prisoner's arms were tied hard and fast he straightway did that which would have astounded his tribesmen and dupes could they have observed him. From a hiding-place he produced a quarter of fresh deer meat and proceeded to broil several slices over a small fire, devouring each before it was half cooked.

Benson remained passive, his eyes all but closed. Dead Sorcerer watched him sharply between mouthfuls at first, then lessened his espionage as the meat demanded his attention. The white man was helpless. His arms were tied and if he attempted to gain his feet he would choke himself with the noose about his neck. And the sorcerer was extremely well pleased with himself and grunted in deep content as he reviewed the successful climax of his schemes.

He or some of his trusted followers had recently made a kill and kept the fact a secret so that he might increase his reputation as a mystery man and at the same time indulge his lust for shedding alien blood. In low gutterals, while waiting for more meat to sear over, he chanted his own greatness, and boastfully assured himself his magic was much greater than that of the white man.

Benson listened to his boasting and noiselessly shifted his position so as to bring the tough strands about his wrists against the dull edge of the rock. The movement, though slight, instantly tightened the grip about his neck and made breathing very difficult. The savage chanted, bolted his meat and smacked his lips loudly. The hunter, half strangled, sawed the thongs against the rock, lacerating the skin most painfully in his furious efforts.

Finally the sorcerer's appetite was appeased and he rose and concealed the remainder of the meat. For a few moments his back was turned and Benson made a supreme effort, knowing it was now or never, and felt the thongs give.

He became motionless as the sorcerer returned to the fire and proceeded to unwrap a roll of deerskin, from which he produced and held up to the light a crystal of quartz, the hunting fetish of the Wolf clan. Placing this on a flat rock he drew a short, thin knife and glided to his prisoner. Although his hands were practically free Benson felt helpless with the noose biting into his neck.

The sorcerer kneeled beside his victim, his gaze gloating. Benson staring into his eyes, read the quick change, the expression of fear, as the sorcerer noted a wisp of the grass thong chafed loose by the rock.

With a low cry the mystery-man raised the knife. At the same moment Benson wrenched loose his hands and doubled up his body with incredible quickness. The freed hands flew to the rope above his head and pulled his body upward enough to relieve the pressure on his neck, his legs straightening. And the astounded savage found his own throat within the vise grip of as muscular a pair of legs as ever tramped over the Cumberlands. Like huge scissors the legs closed together, shutting off the startled yell, as Benson, with his hands gripping the rope, kept the cord slack to avoid choking to death.

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For a few seconds the sorcerer tore frantically at the iron limbs grinding into his throat with such merciless persistency, then remembered his knife which he had dropped in his first confusion. Benson saw him fumble for it but dared not release his hold on the neck rope. Instead he concentrated all his energy and will power in increasing the terrible hold of the corded muscles.

Now the sorcerer's blind fingers were warm, now cold; and the hunter made a supreme effort, the savage's struggles tending to draw him from the boulder and tauten the slip-noose. Now the groping fingers touched the haft of the knife, now the bulging eyes glittered with triumph. A furious but blind thrust, a biting sensation in the white man's hip, a spurt of blood, and, driven to it, Benson released his right hand from the rope, maintained the life-giving slack with his left, and reached down and clutched the dark wrist.

Dead Sorcerer knew the importance of dragging his adversary to the full length of the rope and sought to roll toward the fire. Harder bunched the terrible muscles, closer the legs shut together, as the hunter hooked his moccasined feet together and augmented his purchase, his right hand still holding the knife harmless. Threshing madly the sorcerer made one last effort. Like a flash the hunter's right hand quit wrist for fingers. A mighty squeeze and the knife was his, just as his left hand slipped and allowed the slip-noose to tighten.

WHEN the hunters came running to the village to yelp the glad news the deer were back the Clan of the Wolf loudly rejoiced at the mighty medicine of Dead Sorcerer; and straightway formed a procession with Aganstata in the lead to do the mystery-man fitting honor.

A short distance from the cave the warriors came upon the two attendants who had stood guard during the night. From these it was learned the sorcerer had not yet shown himself. Moving more timidly the procession slowly advanced.

A figure emerged from the mouth of the cave and Aganstata exclaimed in amazement, his followers quickly echoing his outcry. Instead of the sorcerer it was the white hunter who stood confronting them. He raised his right palm in friendly greeting, then inhaling through his pipe blew the smoke to the cardinal points of the compass as a medicine-man would do.

"You come seeking him of the Ani-sahani clan," Benson gravely saluted.

"The deer are back, Galagina," mumbled the chief, stunned at this presence of one who should be dead and by the absence of the sorcerer.

"The deer are back, my brother, because the medicine of Galagina is all powerful and has blown the evil cloud away from your village."

Aganstata remained speechless through worry and bewilderment. One of the sorcerer's attendants crept to his side and whispered:

"Let us call for our master. No one left the cave during the night."

The war chief's eyes kindled.

"Galagina, where is he whom we seek?" he demanded.

Benson turned to the cave and from the entrance leisurely brought forward the sorcerer's small grass mat. On this he placed a haunch of fresh deer meat. This act caused a ripple of astonishment to run through the group. No one had quit the cave and yet here was deer meat. But Benson was not done yet. His climax was accumulative and revealed a true appreciation of dramatic values. A third trip to the cave and he was back with the hunting fetish. As he held it up the warriors beheld it was moist with blood.

"Dead Sorcerer is mighty. But you live?" gasped the chief.

"Chilhowee was a cheat and a liar!" thundered Benson.

Aganstata fell back in great alarm before such sacrilege. The mighty sorcerer had been designated by his boyhood name, meaning "The Kingfisher." This alone was an unpardonable affront to one who dealt in magic. It was equivalent to denying he had ever been a sorcerer. Again the hunter's use of the past tense suggested the incredible, that Dead Sorcerer was mere clay and might be now gathered to his ancestors.

"Chilhowee was a cheat and a liar," repeated Benson. "Let my brother, leader of the fierce Wolf clan, open his ears to his white brother's words, for they will tell him of the white magic. Had not Galagina come to your village the Kingfisher had planned to prove it was you who had driven the deer away.

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"But he knew I was your brother and he feared me and decided to remove me first. I could not have driven the deer away, for behold! they are back. None in the village could have driven them away, for they all live, and yet the deer are back. My brother, one from the clan of Ani-saha-ni put an evil spell on the hunting-grounds of the Wolf. That bad one was Chilhowee, and it was he who drove them away. For he has gone and they have returned. Behold!"

And not affording Aganstata time for word or reflection he brought forth the little grass box and placed it on the mat in sight of all and motioned for them to keep their distance. The last so that the long hair tied to the tiny foot of the mouse might remain invisible. Opening the box he closed his hand gently over the mouse and after holding it thus a prisoner for some moments placed it gently on the mat.

With the end of the hair held between his fingers he solemnly began:

"I now ask my little brother to give a sign that we may truthfully know who drove the deer away. I first call the name of the white hunter—Galagina."

The mouse, feigning death, moved none. After a suitable pause Benson continued—

"I now call the name of the false medicine-man, cheat and liar—Chilhowee."

He tugged the hair smartly. The mouse instantly became alive and ran toward the mouth of the cave.

A low chorus of anger rose from the spectators as they witnessed this proof of the sorcerer's trickery. Benson haughtily concluded:

"The white medicine is mighty. It has fed the hungry crystal and gives you back your deer. Call the roll of the dead and perhaps Chilhowee will answer. A black spirit took him away when his evil magic failed."

"A bat flew from the cave in the middle of the night," cried one of the guards.

This was accepted as a logical explanation, although at Benson's insistence Aganstata and several elderly warriors entered and searched the place. They did not bother with the rearmost chamber, where a rift in the floor extended far down toward the roots of the mountain.

"My brother, the Male Deer, shall go back to the village of the Wolf and my young men shall hunt for him while he is served with food by the Corn Flower," eagerly invited Aganstata as they returned to the sunlight.

And Benson, realizing his medicine had won out over the red, allowed his faculties to relax and filled his pipe with strong tobacco and smoked it contentedly.

Hira Singh's Tale

A Four-Part Story

Conclusion

by **TALBOT MUNDY**

CHAPTER VII

"NOW speak, and we listen," said the Kurd when we had finished eating. Some of his men had come back clustering around him and we were quite a party, filling the shadow of the rock.

"How much of that gold is to be yours?" asked Ranjoor Singh, and the Kurd's eyes blazed.

"Wassmuss promised me so-and-so much," he answered, "if I with three hundred would wait here for the convoy and escort it to where he waits."

"But why do ye serve Wassmuss?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

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"Because he buys friendship, as other men buy ghee, or a horse, or ammunition," said the Kurd. "He spends gold like water, saying it is German gold and in return for it we must harry the British and Russians."

"Yet you and I are friends by bread and salt," said Ranjoor Singh, "and I offer you all this gold, whereas he offers only part of it! Nay, I and my men need none of it—I offer it all!"

"At what price?" asked the Kurd suspiciously. Doubtless men who need no gold were as rare among those mountains as in other places!

"I shall name a price," said Ranjoor Singh. "A low price. We shall both be content with our bargain, and possibly Wassmuss may feel satisfied too for a while."

"Nay, you must be a wizard!" said the Kurd. "Speak on!"

"Tell me first," said Ranjoor Singh, "about the party who went through this defile two days ahead of us."

"What do you know about them?" asked the Kurd.

"This," said Ranjoor Singh. "We have followed them from Mosul, learning here a little and there a little. What is it that they have with them? Who are they? Why were they let pass?"

"They were let pass because Wassmuss gave the order," the Kurd answered. "They are Germans—six German officers, six German servants—and Kurds—twenty-four Kurds of the plains acting as porters and camp-servants—many mules—two mules—bearing a box slung on poles between them."

"What was in the box?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Nay, I know not," said the Kurd.

"Nevertheless," said Ranjoor Singh, "my brother is a man with eyes and ears. What did my brother hear?"

"They said their machine can send and receive a message from places as far apart as Khabul and Stamboul. Doubtless they lied," the Kurd answered.

"Doubtless!" said Ranjoor Singh.

By his slow, even breathing and apparent indifference I knew he was on a hot scent, so I tried to appear indifferent myself, although my ears burned. The Kurds clustering around their leader listened with ears and eyes agape. They made no secret of their interest.

"They said they are on their way to Khabul," the Kurd continued, "there to receive messages from Europe and acquaint the Amir and his ruling chiefs of the true condition of affairs."

"How shall they reach Afghanistan?" asked Ranjoor Singh. "Does a road through Persia lie open to them?"

"Nay," said the Kurd. "Persia is like a nest of hornets. But they are to receive an escort of us Kurds to take them through Persia. We mountain Kurds are not afraid of Persians."

"Which Kurds are to provide the escort?" Ranjoor Singh asked him, and the Kurd shook his head.

"Nay," he said, "that none can tell. It is not yet agreed. There is small competition for the task. There are better pickings here on the border, raiding now and then, and pocketing the gold of this Wassmuss between-whiles! Who wants the task of escorting a machine in a box to Khabul?"

"Nevertheless," said Ranjoor Singh, "I know of a leader and his men who will undertake the task."

"Who then?" said the Kurd.

"I and my men!" said Ranjoor Singh; and I held my breath until I thought my lungs would burst.

"Persia!" thought I. "Afghanistan!" thought I. "How much farther?"

"Ye are not Kurds," the chief answered after he had considered a while. "Wassmuss said the escort must consist of three hundred Kurds or he will not pay."

"The payment shall be arranged between me and thee!" said Ranjoor Singh. "You shall have all the gold of this next convoy, if you will ride back to Wassmuss and agree that you and your men shall be the escort to Afghanistan."

"Who shall guard this pass if I ride back?" the Kurd asked.

"I!" said Ranjoor Singh. "I and my men will wait here for the gold. Leave me a few of your men to be guides and to keep peace between us and other Kurds among these mountains. Ride on and tell Wassmuss that the gold will not come for another thirty days."

"He will not believe," said the Kurd.

"I will give you a letter," said Ranjoor Singh.

"He will not believe the letter," said the Kurd.

"What is that to thee, whether he believes it or not?" said Ranjoor Singh. "At

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least he will believe that Turks brought you the letter, and that you took it to him in good faith. Will he charge you with having written it?"

"Nay," said the Kurd, nodding, "I can not write, and he knows it."

"Do that, then," said Ranjoor Singh. "Ride and agree to be escort for these Germans and their machine to Afghanistan. Leave me here with ten or a dozen of your men, who will guide me after I have the gold to where you shall be camping with your Germans somewhere just beyond the Persian border. I will arrange to overtake you after dusk—perhaps at midnight. There I will give you the gold, and you shall ride away. I and my men will ride on as escort to the Germans."

"What if they object?" said the Kurd.

"Who? The men with the box, or Wassmuss?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Nay," said the Kurd, "Wassmuss will be very glad to get a willing escort. He is in difficulty over that. There will be no objection from him. But what if the men with the box object to the change of escorts?"

"We be over two hundred, and they thirty!" answered Ranjoor Singh, and the Kurd nodded.

"After all," he said, "that is thy affair. But how am I to know you and your men will not ride off with the gold? Nay, I must have the gold first!"

Ranjoor Singh shook his head.

"Then I and my men will stay here and help seize the gold," the Kurd said meaningly.

"Nay!" said Ranjoor Singh. "For then you would fight me for it!"

"Thou and I have eaten bread and salt together!" said the Kurd.

"True," said Ranjoor Singh, "therefore trust me, for I am a Sikh from India."

"I know nothing of Sikhs, or of India," said the Kurd. "Gold I know in the dark, by its jingle and weight, but who knows the heart of a man?"

"Then listen," said Ranjoor Singh. "If you and your men seize the gold you must bear the blame. When the Turks come later on for vengeance, you will hang. But if I stay and take the gold, who shall know who I am? You will be able to prove with the aid of Wassmuss that neither you nor your men were anywhere near when the attack took place."

"Then you will make an ambush?" said the Kurd.

"I will set a trap," said Ranjoor Singh. "Moreover, consider this: You think I may take the gold and keep it. How could I? Having taken it from the Turks, should I ride back toward Turkey? Whither else, then? Shall I escape through Persia, with you and your Kurds to prevent? Nay, we must make a fair bargain as friend with friend—and keep it!"

"If I do as you say," said the Kurd, "if I take this letter to Wassmuss, and agree with him to escort those Germans across Persia, what then if you fail to get the gold? What if the Turks get the better of you?"

"Dead men can not keep bargains!" answered Ranjoor Singh. "I shall succeed or die. But consider again: I have led these men of mine hither from Stamboul, deceiving and routing and outdistancing Turkish regiments all the way. Shall I fail now, having come so far?"

"*Insha Allah!*" said the Kurd, meaning "If God wills."

"Since when did God take sides against the brave?" Ranjoor Singh asked him, and the Kurd said nothing; but I feared greatly because they seemed on the verge of a religious argument, and those Kurds are fanatics.

If anything but gold had been in the balance against him I believe that Kurd would have defied us; for although he did not know what Sikhs might be, he knew us for no Mussulmans. I saw his eyes look inward meditating treachery, not only to Wassmuss but to us too. But Ranjoor Singh detected that quicker than I did.

"Let us neglect no points," he said, and the Kurd brought his mind back with an effort from considering plans against us. "It would be possible for me to get that gold, and for other Kurds—not you or your men, of course, but other Kurds—to waylay me in the mountains. Therefore let part of the agreement be that you leave with me ten hostages, of whom two shall be your blood relations."

The Kurd winced. He was a little, keen man, with a thin face and prominent nose; not ill-looking, but extremely acquisitive, I should say.

"Wassmuss holds my brother hostage!" he answered grimly, as if he had just then thought of it.

"I have a German prisoner here," said

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Ranjoor Singh, with the nearest approach to a smile that he had permitted himself yet, "and Wassmuss will be very glad to exchange him against your brother when the time comes."

"Ah!" said the Kurd, and——

"Ah!" said Ranjoor Singh. He saw now which way the wind blew, and like all born cavalry leaders he pressed his advantage. "Do the Turks hold any of your men prisoner?" he asked.

"Aye!" said the Kurd. "They hold an uncle of mine, and my half-brother, and seven of my best men. They keep them in jail in fetters."

"I have five Turkish prisoners, all officers, one a bimbashi, whom I will give you when I hand over the gold. The Turks will gladly trade your men against their officers," Ranjoor Singh assured him. "You shall have them and the German to make your trade with."

It was plain the Kurd was more than half-convinced. His men who swarmed around him were urging him in whispers. Doubtless they knew he would keep most, if not all of the gold for himself, but the safety of their friends made more direct appeal and I don't think he would have dared neglect that opportunity for fear of losing their allegiance. Nevertheless, he bargained to the end.

"Give me, then, ten hostages against my ten, and we are agreed!" he urged.

"Nay, nay!" said Ranjoor Singh. "It is my task to fight for that gold. Shall I weaken my force by ten men?" Nay, we are already few enough! I will give you one—to be exchanged against your ten at the time of giving up the gold in Persia."

"Ten!" said the Kurd. "Ten against ten!"

"One!" said Ranjoor Singh, and I thought they would quarrel and the whole plan would come to nothing. But the Kurd gave in.

"Then one officer!" said the Kurd, and I trembled, for I saw that Ranjoor Singh intended to agree to that, and I feared he might pick me.

But no. If I had thought a minute I would not have feared, yet who thinks at such times? The men who think first of their charge and last of their own skin are such as Ranjoor Singh; a year after war begins they are still leading. The rest of us must either be content to be led, or else are superseded. I burst into a sweat all over, for all that a cold wind swept among the rocks. Yet I might have known I was not to be spared.

After two seconds, that seemed two hours, he said to the Kurd:

"Very well. We are agreed. I will give you one of my officers against ten of your men. I will give you Gooja Singh!" said he.

SAHIB, I could have rolled among the rocks and laughed. The look of rage mingled with amazement on Gooja Singh's fat face was payment enough for all the insults I had received from him. I could not conceal all my merriment. Doubtless my eyes betrayed me. I doubt not they blazed. Gooja Singh was sitting on the other side of Ranjoor Singh, partly facing me, so that he missed nothing of what passed over my face—as I scarcely intended that he should. And in a moment my mirth was checked by sight of his awful wrath. His face had turned many shades darker.

"I am to be hostage?" he said, in a voice like grinding stone.

"Aye," said Ranjoor Singh. "Be a proud one! They have had to give ten men to weigh against you in the scale!"

"And I am to go away with them all by myself into the mountains?"

"Aye," said Ranjoor Singh. "Why not? We hold ten of theirs against your safe return."

"Good! Then I will go!" he answered, and I knew by the black look on his face and by the dull rage in his voice that he would harm us if he could.

But there was no time just then to try to dissuade Ranjoor Singh from his purpose, even had I dared. There began to be great argument about the ten hostages the Kurd should give, Ranjoor Singh examining each one with the aid of Abraham, rejecting one man after another as not sufficiently important, and it was two hours before ten Kurds that satisfied him stood unarmed in our midst. Then he gave up Gooja Singh in exchange for them; and Gooja Singh walked away among the Kurds without so much as a backward look, or a word of good-by, or a salute.

"He should be punished for not saluting you," said I, going to Ranjoor Singh's side. "It is a bad example to the troopers."

"*Kuch—Kuch*—" said he. "No trouble. Black hearts beget black deeds. White

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hearts, good deeds. Maybe we all misjudged him. Let him prove whether he is true at heart or not."

Observe, sahib, how he identified himself with us, although he knew well that all except I until recently had denied him title to any other name than traitor. "Maybe we all misjudged," said he, as much as to say "what my men have done, I did." So you may tell the difference between a great man and a mean one.

"Better have hanged him long ago!" said I. "He will be the ruin of us yet!" But he laughed.

"Sahib," I said. "Suppose he should get to see this Wassmuss?"

"I have thought of that," he answered. "Why should the Kurds let him go near Wassmuss? Unless they return him safely to us we can execute their hostages; they will run no risk of Wassmuss playing tricks with Gooja Singh. Besides, from what I can learn and guess from what the Kurds say, this Wassmuss is to all intents and purposes a prisoner. Another tribe of Kurds, pretending to protect him, keep him very closely guarded.

"The best he can do is to play off one tribe against another. Our friend said Wassmuss holds his brother for hostage, but I think the fact is the other tribe holds him and Wassmuss gets the blame. I suspect they held our friend's brother as security for the gold he is to meet and escort back. There is much politics working in these mountains."

"Much politics and little hope for us!" said I, and at that he turned on me as he never had done yet.

No, sahib, I never saw him turn on any man, nor speak as savagely as he did to me then. It was as if the floodgates of his weariness were down at last and I got a glimpse of what he suffered—he who had dared trust no one all these months and miles.

"Did I not say months ago," he mocked me, "that if I told you half my plan you would quail? And that if I told the whole, you would pick it to pieces like hens round a scrap of meat? Man without thought! Can I not see the dangers? Have I no eyes —no ears? Do I need a frog to croak to me of risks whichever way I turn? Do I need men to hang back, or men to lend me courage?"

"Who hangs back?" said I. "Nay, forward! I will die beside you, sahib!"

"I seek life for you all, not death," he answered, but he spoke so sadly that I think in that minute his hope and faith were at lowest ebb.

"Nevertheless," I answered, "if need be, I will die beside you. I will not hang back. Order, and I obey!" But he looked at me as if he doubted.

"Boasting," he said, "is the noise fools make to conceal from themselves their failings!"

What could I answer to that? I sat down and considered the rebuff, while he went and made great preparation for an execution and a Turkish funeral. So that there was little extra argument required to induce one of our Turkish officer prisoners—the bimbashi himself in fact—to write the letter to Wassmuss that Ranjoor Singh required. And that he gave to the Kurdish chief, and the Kurd rode away with his men, not looking once back at the hostages he had left with us, but making a great show of guarding Gooja Singh who rode unarmed in the center of a group of horsemen.

That instant I began to feel sorry for Gooja Singh, and later, when we advanced through those blood-curdling mountains I was sorrier yet to think of him borne away alone amid savages whose tongue he could not speak. The men all felt sorry for him too, but Ranjoor Singh gave them little time for talk about it, setting them at once to various tasks, not least of which was cleaning rifles for inspection.

I took Abraham to interpret for me and went to talk with our ten hostages, who were herded together apart from the other ten Kurds. They seemed to regard themselves as in worse plight than prisoners and awaited with resignation whatever might be their *kismet*. So I asked them were they afraid lest Gooja Singh might meet with violence, and they replied they were afraid of nothing. They added, however, that no man could say in those mountains what this day or the next might bring forth.

Then I asked them about Wassmuss, and they rather confirmed Ranjoor Singh's guess about his being practically a prisoner. They said he was ever on the move, surrounded and very closely watched by the particular tribe of Kurds that had possession of him for the moment.

"First it is one tribe, then another," they told me. "If you keep your bargain with

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our chief and he gets this gold, we shall have Wassmuss too within a week, for we shall buy the allegiance of one or two more tribes to join with us and oust those Kurds who hold him now. Hitherto the bulk of his gold has been going into Persia to bribe the Bakhtiari Khans and suchlike, but that day is gone by. Now we Kurds will grow rich. But as for us,"—they shrugged their shoulders like this, sahib, meaning to say that perhaps their day had gone by also. I left them with the impression they are very fatalistic folk.

There was no means of knowing how long we might have to wait there, so Ranjoor Singh gave orders for the best shelter possible to be prepared, and what with the cave at the rear, and plundered blankets, and one thing and another we contrived a camp that was almost comfortable. What troubled us most was shortage of firewood, and we had to send out foraging parties in every direction at no small risk.

The Kurds, like our mountain-men of northern India leave such matters to their womenfolk, and there was more than voice raised in anger at Ranjoor Singh because he had not allowed us to capture women as well as food and horses. Our Turkish prisoners laughed at us for not having stolen women, and Tugendheim vowed he had never seen such fools as us.

But as it turned out we had not long to wait. That very evening as I watched from between two great boulders I beheld a Turkish convoy of about six hundred infantry, led by a bimbashi on a gray horse, with a string of pack-mules trailing out behind them, and five loaded donkeys led by soldiers in their midst. They were heading toward the hills, and I sent a man running to bring Ranjoor Singh to watch them.

It soon became evident that they meant to camp on the plains for that night. They had tents with them, and they pitched a camp three-quarters of a mile, or perhaps a mile away from the mouth of our defile, at a place where a little stream ran between rocks. It was clear they suspected no treachery, or they would never have chosen that place, they being but six hundred and the hills full of Kurds so close at hand.

Nevertheless, they were very careful to set sentries on all the rocks all about, and they gave us no ground for thinking we might take them by surprise. Seeing they outnumbered us, and we had to spare a guard for our prisoners and hostages, and that fifty of our force were Syrians and therefore not much use, I felt doubtful. I thought Ranjoor Singh felt doubtful too, until I saw him glance repeatedly behind and study the sky. Then I began to hope as furiously as he.

The Turks down on the plain were studying the sky too. We could see them fix bayonets and make little trenches about the tents. Another party of them gathered stones with which to reenforce the tent-pegs, and in every other way possible they made ready against one of those swift, sudden storms that so often burst down the sides of mountains. Most of us had experienced such storms a dozen times or more in the foot-hills of our Himalayas, and all of us knew the signs. As evening fell the sky to our rear grew blacker than night itself and a chill swept down the defile like the finger of death.

"Repack the camp!" commanded Ranjoor Singh. "Stow everything in the cave!"

There was grumbling, for we had all looked forward to a warm night's rest.

"Tonight your hearts must warm you!" he said striding to and fro to make sure his orders were obeyed.

It was dark by the time we had finished. Then he made us fall in, in our ragged overcoats—aye, ragged, for those German overcoats had served as coats and tents and what-not, and were not made to stand the wear of British ones in any case—unmounted he made us fall in, at which there was grumbling again.

"Ye shall prove tonight," he said, "whether ye can endure what mules and horses never could! Warmth ye shall have, if your hearts are true, but the man who can keep dry shall be branded for a wizard! Imagine yourselves back in Flanders!"

Most of us shuddered. I know I did. The wind had begun whimpering, and every now and then would whistle and rise into a scream. A few drops of heavy rain fell. Then would come a lull, while we could feel the air grow colder. Our Flanders experience was likely to stand us in good stead.

TUGENDHEIM and the Syrians were left in charge of our belongings. There was nothing else to do with them because the Syrians were in more deathly fear of the storm than they ever had been of Turks, although we did not

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find them despicable. Unmilitary people though they were they had marched and endured and labored like good men; but certain things they seemed to accept as being more than men could overcome, and this sort of storm apparently was one of them.

We tied the mules and horses very carefully, because we did not believe the Syrians would stand by them when the storm began, and we were right. Tugendheim begged hard to be allowed to come with us, but Ranjoor Singh would not let him. I don't know why, but I think he suspected Tugendheim of knowing something about the German officers who were ahead of us, in which case Tugendheim was likely to risk anything rather than continue going forward; and, having promised him to the Kurdish chief, it would not have suited Ranjoor Singh to let him escape into Turkey again.

The ten Kurds who had been left with us as guides and to help us keep peace among the mountains all volunteered to lend a hand in the fight, and Ranjoor Singh accepted gladly. The hostages, on the other hand, were a difficult problem; for they detested being hostages. They would have made fine allies for Tugendheim supposing he had meditated any action in our rear. They could have guided him among the mountains with all our horses and mules and supplies. And suppose he had made up his mind to start through the storm to find Wassmuss with their aid, what could have prevented him? He might betray us to Wassmuss as the price of his own forgiveness. So we took the hostages with us, and when we found a place between some rocks where they could have shelter we drove them in there, setting four troopers to guard them.

Thus Tugendheim was kept in ignorance of their whereabouts, and with no guides to help him play us false. As for the Greek doctor, we took him with us too, for we were likely to need his services that night; and in truth we did.

We started the instant the storm began—twenty minutes or more before it settled down to rage in earnest. That enabled us to march about two-thirds of the way toward the Turkish camp and to deploy into proper formation before the hail came and made it impossible to hear even a shout. Hitherto the rain had screened us splendidly although it drenched us to the skin, and the noise of rain and wind prevented the noise we made from giving the alarm; but when the hail began I could not hear my own footfall. Ranjoor Singh roared out the order to double forward, but could make none hear, so he seized a rifle from the nearest man and fired it off. Perhaps a dozen men heard that and began to double. The remainder saw, and followed suit.

The hail was in our backs. No men ever lived who could have charged forward into it, and not one of the Turkish sentries made pretense at anything but running for his life. Long before we reached their posts they were gone, and a flash of lightning showed the tents blown tighter than drums in the gaining wind and white with the hail-stones. When we reached the tents there was hail already half-a-foot deep underfoot where the wind had blown it into drifts, and the next flash of lightning showed one tent—the bimbashi's own—split open and blown fluttering into strips.

The bimbashi rushed out with a blanket round his head and shoulders and tried to kick men out of another tent to make room for him, and failing to do that he scrambled in on top of them. Opening the tent let the wind in, and that tent too split and fluttered and blew away. And so at last they saw us coming.

They saw us when we were so close that there was no time to do much else than run away or surrender. Quite a lot of them ran away I imagine, for they disappeared. The bimbashi tried to pistol Ranjoor Singh, and died for his trouble on a trooper's bayonet. Some of the Turks tried to fight, and they were killed. Those who surrendered were disarmed and driven away into the storm, and the last we saw of them was when a flash of lightning showed them hurrying helter-skelter through the hail with hands behind their defenseless heads trying to ward off hail-stones. They looked very ridiculous, and I remember I laughed.

I? My share of it? A Turkish soldier tried to drive a bayonet through me. I think he was the last one left in camp—the whole business can only have lasted three or four minutes, once we were among them. I shot him with the repeating pistol that had once been Tugendheim's—this one, see, sahib—and believing the camp was now ours and the fighting over, I lay down and dragged his body over me to save me

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from hail-stones, that had made me ache already in every inch of my body.

I rolled under and pulled the body over in one movement; and seeing the body, and thinking a Turk was crawling up to attack him, one of our troopers thrust his bayonet clean through it. It was a goodly thrust, delivered by a man who prided himself on being workmanlike. If the Turk had not been a fat one I should not be here. Luckily I had chosen one whose weight made me grunt, and because of his thickness the bayonet only pierced an inch or two of my thigh.

I yelled and kicked the body off me. The trooper made as if to use the steel again, thinking we were two Turks, and my pointing a pistol at him only served to confirm the belief. But next minute the lightning showed the true facts, and he came and sat beside me with his back to the hail, grinning like an ape.

"That was a good thrust of mine!" he bellowed in my ear. "But for me that Turk would have had your life!"

When I had cursed his mother's ancestors for a dozen generations in some detail the truth dawned on him at last. I took his weapon away from him while he bound a strip of cloth about my thigh, for I knew the thought had come into his thick skull to finish me off and so save explanations afterward.

I would gladly have let him go with nothing further said, for I knew the man's first intention had been honest enough, but I did not dare do that because he would certainly suppose me to be meditating vengeance. So I flew into a great rage with him, and drove him in front of me until we found a dead mule—whether killed by hail or bullet I don't know—and he and I lay between the mule's legs, snuggling under its belly, until the storm should cease and I could take him before Ranjoor Singh.

I did not know where the gold was, nor where anything or anybody was. I could see about three yards, except when the lightning flashed; and then I could see only a stricken plain, with dead animals lying about, and fallen tents lumpy with the men who huddled underneath, and here and there a live animal with his rump to the hail and head between his forelegs.

When the storm ceased, suddenly, as all such mountain hail-storms do, I ordered my trooper in front of me and went limping through the darkness shouting for Ranjoor Singh, and I found him at last sitting on the rump of a dead donkey with the ten boxes of gold coin beside him—quite little boxes, yet only two to a donkey load.

"I have the gold," he said. "What have you?"

"A stab," said I, "and the fool who gave it to me!" And I showed my leg, with the blood trickling down. "I had killed a Turk," said I, "and this muddlehead with no discernment had the impudence to try to finish the job. Behold the result!"

He was one great bruise from head to foot from hail-stones, yet with all he had to think about and all his aches he had understanding enough to spare for my little problem. He saw at once that he must punish the man in order to convince him his account with me was settled.

"Be driver of asses," he ordered, "until we reach Persia! There were five asses. One is dead. It is good we have another to replace the fifth!"

There goes the trooper, sahib—he yonder with the limp. He and I are as good friends today as daffadar and trooper can be, but he would have slain me to save himself from vengeance unless Ranjoor Singh had punished him that night.

But my tale is not of that trooper, nor of myself. I tell of Ranjoor Singh. Consider him, sahib, seated on the dead ass beside ten chests of captured gold, with scarcely a man of us fit to help him or obey an order, and himself bleeding in fifty places where the hail had pierced his skin. We were drenched and numbed, with the spirit beaten out of us; yet I tell you he wiped the blood from his nose and beard and made us save ourselves!

CHAPTER VIII

Here are men from both sides, and how shall I be neutral?

WELL, sahib, our journey was not nearly at an end, but my tale is; I can finish it by sundown. After that fight there was no more doubt of us; we were one again—one in our faith in our leader, and with men so minded such a man as Ranjoor Singh can make miracles seem like details of a day's work.

Turks who had been bayoneted and Turks slain by hailstones lay all about us, and we should have been dead too only that the hail

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was in our backs. As it was, ten of our men lay killed and more than thirty stunned, some of whom did not recover. Our little Greek doctor announced himself too badly injured to help any one, but when Ranjoor Singh began to choose a firing party for him he changed his mind.

The four living donkeys were too bruised by the hail to bear a load, but the Turks had had some mules with them and we loaded our dead and wounded on those, gathered up the plunder, told off four troopers to each chest of gold, and dragged ourselves away. It was essential that we get back to the hills before dawn should disclose our predicament, for whatever Kurds should chance to spy us would never have been restrained by promises or by ritual of friendship from taking prompt advantage. A savage is a savage.

The moon came out from behind clouds, and we cursed it, for we did not want to be seen. It shone on a world made white with hail—on a stricken camp—dead animals—dead men.

We who had swept down from the hills like the very spirit of the storm itself returned like a funeral cortège, all groaning, chilled to the bone by the searching wind, and it was beginning to be dawn when the last man dragged himself between the boulders into our camping ground. We looked so little like victors that the Syrians sent up a wail and Tugendheim began tugging at his mustaches, but Ranjoor Singh set them at once to feeding and grooming animals and soon disillusioned them as to the outcome of the night.

Now we began to pray for time, to recover from the effects of hail and chill. Some of the men began to develop fevers, and if Ranjoor Singh had not fiercely threatened the doctor things might have gone from bad to worse. As it was, three men died of something the matter with their lungs, and five men died of wounds. Yet on the other hand we did not desire too much time, because—surest of all certainties—the Turks were going to send regiments in a hurry to wreak vengeance.

Before noon somebody rallied the remnants of the convoy we had beaten and brought them back to bury dead and look for property, and they looked quite a formidable body as I watched them from between the boulders. They soon went away again, having found nothing but tents torn to rags; but I counted more than four hundred, which rather lessened my conceit. It had been the storm that night that did the work, not we.

We could not burn our dead, for lack of sufficient wood, although we drove the Syrians out of camp to gather more; so we buried them in a trench, and covered them, and laid little fires at intervals along the new stamped earth and set light to those. We did not bury them very deep, because a bayonet is a fool of a weapon with which to excavate a grave and a Syrian no expert digger in any case; so when the fires were burned out we piled rocks on the grave to defeat jackals.

The Kurdish chief returned on the fifth day and by that time, although most of us still ached, some of us looked like men again, and what with the plunder we had taken, and the chests of gold in full view, he was well impressed. He began by demanding the gold at once, and Ranjoor Singh surprised me by the calm courtesy with which he refused.

"Why should my brother seek to alter the terms of our bargain?" he asked.

For a long time the Kurd made no answer, but sat thinking for some excuse that might deceive us. Then suddenly he abandoned hope of argument and flew into a rage, spitting savagely and pouring out such a flood of words that Abraham could hardly translate fast enough.

"That pig you gave me for a hostage played a trick!" he shouted. "He and a man of mine knew Persian. They talked together. Then in the night they ran away, and your hostage went to Wassmuss, and has told him all the truth and more untruth into the bargain than ten other men could invent in a year! So Wassmuss threw in my teeth that letter you gave me, and I was laughed out of countenance by a heritage of spawn of Tophet! And what has Wassmuss done but persuade three hundred Kurds of a tribe who are my enemies to accept this duty of escort at a great price! And so your Germans are gone into Persia already! Now give me the gold and my hostage back, and I will leave you to your own devices!"

It was an hour before Ranjoor Singh could calm him, and another hour again before cross-examination induced him to tell all the truth; and the truth was not reassuring. Wassmuss, he said, proably did not know

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yet that we had taken the gold, but the news was on the way, for spies had talked in the night with the ten Kurds whom he left with us to be guides and to help us keep peace. We had given those ten a Turkish rifle each and various other plunder, because they helped us in the fight, and they had promised in return to hold their tongues. But a savage is a savage, and there is no controverting it.

"What is Wassmuss likely to do?" Ranjoor Singh asked.

"Do?" said the Kurd. "He has done! He has set two tribes by the ears and sent them down to surround you and hem you in and starve you to surrender! So give me the gold, that I may get away with it before a thousand men come to prevent; and give me back my hostages!"

If what was happening now had taken place but a week before, Ranjoor Singh would have found himself in a fine fix, for all except I would have there and then denounced him for a bungler, or a knave. But now the other daffadars who clustered around him and me said one to the other, "Let us see what our sahib makes of it!" The men sent word to know what was being revealed through two long hours of talk, and Chatar Singh went back to bid them have patience.

"Is there trouble?" they asked, and he answered—

"Aye!"

"Tell our sahib we stand behind him!" they answered, and Chatar Singh brought that message, and I think it did Ranjoor Singh's heart good—not that he would not have done his best in any case.

"You have lost my hostage, and I hold yours," he told the Kurd, "so now, if you want yours back you must pay whatever price I name for them!"

"Who am I to pay a price?" the Kurd demanded. "I have neither gold nor goods, nor anything, but three hundred men!"

"Where are thy men?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Within an hour's ride," said the Kurd, "watching for the men who come from Wassmuss."

"You shall have back your hostages," said Ranjoor Singh, "when I and my men set foot in Persia!"

"How shall you reach Persia?" laughed the Kurd. "A thousand men ride now to shut you off! Nay, give me the gold and my men, and ride back whence you came!"

Then it was Ranjoor Singh's turn to laugh.

"Sikhs who are facing homeward turn back for nothing less than duty!" he answered. "I shall fight the thousand men that Wassmuss sends. If they conquer me they will take the gold and your hostages as well."

The Kurd looked amazed. Then he looked thoughtful. Then acquisitive—very acquisitive, indeed. It seemed to me that he contemplated fighting us first, before the Wassmuss men could come. But Ranjoor Singh understood him better. That Kurd was no fool—only a savage, with a great hunger in him to become powerful.

"My men are seasoned warriors," said Ranjoor Singh, "and being men of our word first and last, we are good allies. Has my brother a suggestion?"

"What if I help you into Persia?" said the Kurd.

But Ranjoor Singh was wary.

"Help me in what way?" he asked, and the Kurd saw it was no use to try trickery.

"What if I and my men fight beside you and yours, and so you win through to Persia?" asked the Kurd.

"As I said," said Ranjoor Singh, "you shall have back your hostages on the day we set foot in Persia."

"But the gold!" said the Kurd. "But the gold!"

"Half of the gold you shall have on the third day after we reach Persia," said Ranjoor Singh.

WELL, sahib, as to that they higgled and bargained for another hour, Ranjoor Singh yielding little by little until at last the bargain stood that the Kurd should have all the gold except one chest on the seventh day after we reached Persia. Thus the Kurds would be obliged to give us escort well on our way.

But the bargaining was not over yet. It was finally agreed that after we reached Persia, provided the Kurds helped us bravely and with good faith, on the first day we would give them back their hostages; on the third day we would give them Tugendheim, to trade with Wassmuss against the Kurd's brother—thus keeping Ranjoor Singh's promise to Tugendheim to provide for him in the end—on the fifth day we would give them our Turkish officer

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prisoners, to trade with the Turks against Kurdish prisoners; and on the seventh day we would give them the gold and leave to go. We ate more bread and salt on that, and then I went to tell the men.

But I scarcely had time to tell them. Ranjoor Singh had out his map when I left him, and he and the Kurd were poring over it, he tracing with a finger and asking swift questions, and the Kurd with the aid of Abraham trying to understand. Yet I had hardly told the half of what I meant to say when Ranjoor Singh strode past me, and the Kurd went galloping away between the boulders to warn his own men, leaving with us not only the hostages but the ten guides also.

"Make ready to march at once—immediately—*ek dum!*" Ranjoor Singh growled to me as he passed, and from that minute until we were away and well among the hills I was kept too busy with details to do much talking or conjecturing.

A body of soldiers with transport and prisoners, wounded and sick, needs nearly as much herding as a flock of sheep, even after months of campaigning when each man's place and duty should be second nature. Yet oh, it was different now! There was no need now to listen for whisperings of treason! Now we knew who the traitor had been all along—not Ranjoor Singh, who had done his best from first to last, but Gooja Singh who had let no opportunity go by for defaming him and making trouble!

"This for Gooja Singh when I set eyes on him!" said not one trooper but every living man, licking a cartridge and slipping it into the breech chamber as we started.

We did not take the track up which the Kurdish chief had galloped, but the ten guides led us by a dreadful route round almost the half of a circle, ever mounting upward. When night fell we camped without fires in a hollow among crags, and about midnight when the moon rose there was a challenge, and a short parley, and a Kurd rode in with a message from his chief for Ranjoor Singh.

The message was verbal, and had to be translated by Abraham, but I did not get to hear the wording of it. I was on guard.

"It is well," said Ranjoor Singh to me, when he went the rounds and found me perched on a crag like a temple minaret, "they are keeping faith. The Wassmuss men are in the pass below us, and our friends deny them passage. At dawn there will be a fight and our friends will probably give ground. Two hours before dawn we will march, and come down behind the Wassmuss men. Be ready!"

The sahib will understand now better what I meant by saying Anim Singh has ears too big for his head. Because of his big ears, that could detect a footfall in the darkness farther away than any of us, he had been sent to share the guard with me, and now he came looming up out of the night to share our counsels; for since the news of Gooja Singh's defection there was no longer even a pretense at awkwardness in approaching Ranjoor Singh. Anim Singh had been among the first to fling distrust to the winds and to make the fact evident.

But into those great ears, during all our days and weeks and months of marching, Gooja Singh had whispered—whispered. The things men whisper to each other are like deeds done in the dark—like rats that run in holes, put to shame by daylight. So Anim Singh came now, and Ranjoor Singh repeated to him what he had just told me. Anim Singh laughed.

"Leave the Kurds to fight it out below, then!" said he. "While they fight, let us eat up distance into Persia, gold and all!"

Ranjoor Singh, with the night mist sparkling like jewels on his beard, eyed him in silence for a minute. Then:

"I give thee leave," he said, "to take as many men as share that opinion, and to bolt for your skins into Persia or anywhither! The rest of us will stay and keep the regiment's promise!"

That was enough for Anim Singh. I have said he is a Sikh with a soldier's heart. He wept, there on the ledge where we three leaned, and begged forgiveness until Ranjoor Singh told him curtly that forgiveness came of deeds, not words. And his deed paid the price that dawn. He is a very good man with the saber, and the saber he took from a Turkish officer was, weight and heft and length, the very image of the weapon he was used to. Nay, who was I to count the Kurds he slew. I was busy with my own work, sahib.

The fight below us began before the earliest color of dawn flickered along the heights. And though we started when the first rifle-shot gave warning, hiding our plunder and mules among the crags in

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charge of the Syrians, but taking Tugendheim with us, the way was so steep and devious that morning came and found us worrying lest we come too late to help our friends—even as once we worried in the Red Sea!

But as we had come in the nick of time before, even so now. We swooped all unexpected on the rear of the Wassmuss men, taking ourselves by surprise as much as them, for we had thought the fight yet miles away. Echoes make great confusion in the mountains. It was echoes that had kept the Wassmuss men from hearing us, although we made more noise than an avalanche of fighting animals.

Straightway we all looked for Wassmuss, and none found him for the simple reason that he was not there; a prisoner we took told us afterward that Wassmuss was too valuable to be trusted near the border, where he might escape to his own folk. There is no doubt Wassmuss was prisoner among the Kurds—nor any doubt either that he directs all the uprising and raiding and disaffection in Kurdistan and Persia. As Ranjoor Singh said of him—a remarkable man, and not to be despised.

Seeing no Wassmuss it occurred to me at last to listen to orders! Ranjoor Singh was shouting to me as if to burst his lungs. The Kurds were fighting on foot, taking cover behind boulders, and he was bidding me take my command and find their horses.

I found them, sahib, within an ace of being too late. They had left them in a valley bottom with a guard of but twenty or thirty men, who mistook us at first for Kurds I suppose, for they took no notice of us. I have spent much time wondering whence they expected mounted Kurds to come; but it is clear they were so sure of victory for their own side that it did not enter their heads to suspect us until our first volley dropped about half of them.

Then the remainder began to try to loose the horses and gallop away, and some of them succeeded; but we captured more than half the horses and began at once to try to get them away into the hills. But it is no easy matter to manage several hundred frightened horses that were never more than half-tamed in any case, and many of them broke away from us and raced after their friends. Then I sent a messenger in a hurry to Ranjoor Singh, to say the utmost had been attempted and enough accomplished to serve his present purpose, but the messenger was cut down by the first of a crowd of fugitive Kurds, who seized his reins and fought among themselves to get his horse.

Seeing themselves taken in the rear the Kurds had begun to fall back in disorder, and had actually burst through our mounted ranks in a wild effort to get to their own horses; for like ourselves, the Kurds prefer to fight mounted and have far less confidence in themselves on foot. Ranjoor Singh with our men, all mounted, and our Kurdish friends, were after them—although our friends were too busy burdening themselves with the rifles and other belongings of the fallen to render as much aid as they ought.

I left my horse, and climbed a rock, and looked for half a minute. Then I knew what to do; and I wonder whether ever in the world was such a running fight before! I had only lost one man; and it was quite another matter driving the Kurds' horses up the valley in the direction they wished to take, to attempting to drive them elsewhither. Being mounted ourselves we could keep ahead of the retreating Kurds very easily, so we adopted the same tactics again and again and again.

First we drove the horses helter-skelter up the valley a mile or two. Then we halted, and hid our own horses, and took cover behind the rocks to wait for the Kurds; and as they came, making a good running fight of it, dodging hither and thither behind the boulders to try to pick off Ranjoor Singh's men, we would open fire on their rear unexpectedly, thus throwing them into confusion—again and again and again.

We opened fire always at too great distance to do much material damage, I thinking it more important to preserve my own men's lives and so to continue able to demoralize the Kurds; and afterward Ranjoor Singh commended me for that. But I was also acutely aware of the risk that our bullets might go past the Kurds and kill our own Sikhs. I am not at all sure some accidents of that nature did not happen.

So when we had fired at the Kurds enough to make them face about and so expose their rear to Ranjoor Singh, we would get to horse again and send the Kurdish horses galloping up the pass in front of us. Finally we lost sight of most of the Kurdish

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horses, although we captured one apiece—which is all a man can manage besides his own and a rifle.

By that time it was three in the afternoon already and the pass forked about a dozen different ways, so that we lost the Kurds at last, they scattering to right and left and shooting at us at long range from the crags higher up. We were all dead beat, and the horses too, so we rested, the Kurds continuing to fire at us, but doing no damage. They fired until dusk.

OUR own three hundred Kurdish friends were not very far behind Ranjoor Singh, and I observed when they came up with us presently that he took up position down the pass behind them. They were too fond of loot to be trusted between us and that gold! They were so burdened with plunder that some of them could scarcely ride their horses. Several had as many as three rifles each, and they had found great bundles of food and blankets where the enemy's horses had been tethered.

Their plundering had cost them dear, for they had exposed themselves recklessly to get what their eyes lusted for. They had lost more than fifty men. But we had lost more than twenty killed, and there was a very long tale of wounded, so that Ranjoor Singh looked serious as he called the roll. The Greek doctor had to work that night as if his own life depended on it—as in fact it did! We made Tugendheim help him, for like all German soldiers he knew something of first aid.

Then because the Kurds could not be trusted on such an errand Ranjoor Singh sent me back with fifty men to bring on the Syrians and our mules and belongings, and the gold. He gave me Chatar Singh to help, and glad I was to have him. A brave, good daffadar is Chatar Singh, and now that all suspicion of our leader was weaned out of him I could ask for no better comrade on a dark night. Night did I say? That was a night like death itself, when a man could scarcely see his own hand held thus before his face—cold, and rainy to make matters worse.

We had two Kurds to show us the way, and, I supposed because our enemies had had enough of it, we were not fired on once, going or coming. Our train of mules clattered and stumbled, and our Syrians kept losing themselves and yelling to be found again. Weary men and animals ever make more noise than fresh ones; frightened men more than either; and we were so dead weary by the time we got back that my horse fell under me by Ranjoor Singh's side.

Of all the nights I ever lived through, except those last we spent in the trench in Flanders before our surrender, that was the worst. Hunger and cold and fear and weariness all wrought their worst with me; yet I had to set an example to the men. My horse, as I have told, fell beside Ranjoor Singh; he dragged me to my feet, and I fell again, dizzy with misery and aching bones.

Yet it was beginning to be dawn then, and we had to be up and off again. Our dead were buried; our wounded were bound up; the Kurds would be likely to begin on us again at any minute; there was nothing to wait there for. We left little fires burning above the long grave—for our men had brought all our dead along with them, although our Kurdish friends left theirs behind—and I took one of the captured horses, and Ranjoor Singh led on. I slept on the march. Nay, I had no eye for scenery in those days!

After that the unexpected, amazing, happened as it so often does in war. We were at the mercy of any handful who cared to waylay us, for the hillsides shut us in, and there was cover enough among the boulders to have hidden a great army. It was true we had worsted the Wassmuss men utterly; I think we slew at least half of them, and doubtless that, and the loss of their horses, must have taken much heart out of the rest. But we expected at least to be attacked by friends of the men we had worsted—by mountain cut-throats, thieves, and plunderers, any fifty of whom could have made our march impossible, by sniping us from the flanks.

But nothing happened, and nobody attacked us. As we marched our spirit grew. We began to laugh and make jokes about the enemy hunting for lost horses and letting us go free. For two days we rode, and camped, and slept a little, and rode on unmolested, climbing ever forward to where we could see the peaks that our friendly chief assured us were in Persia.

For miles and miles and everlasting miles it seemed the passes all led upward; but there came a noon at last when we were able to feel, and even see—when at least we

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knew in our hearts that the up-hill work was over. We could see other ranges, running in other directions, and mountains with tree-draped sides. But chiefly it was our hearts that told us we were really in sight of Persia at last.

Then wounded and all we gathered together, with Ranjoor Singh in the midst of us, and sang the "Anand," our Sikh hymn of joy, our Kurdish friends standing by and wondering—not forgetting nevertheless to watch for opportunity to snatch that gold and run!

And there, on the very ridge dividing Persia from Asiatic Turkey, it was given to us to understand at last a little of the why and wherefore of our marching unmolested. We came to a crack in a rock by the wayside. And in the crack had been thrust so that it stood upright a gnarled tree-trunk, carried from who knows how far. And there, crucified to the dry wood was our daffadar Gooja Singh, with his flesh all tortured and torture written in his open eyes—not very long dead, for his flesh was scarcely cold—although the birds had already begun on him. Who could explain that? Not I! Not any one! We sat our horses in a crowd and gaped.

At last I said:

"Leave him to the birds!" But Ranjoor Singh said—

"Nay!"

Ramnarain Singh, who had ever hated Gooja Singh for reasons of his own, joined his voice to mine; and because they had no wish to offend me the other daffadars agreed. But Ranjoor Singh rose into a towering passion over what we said, naming me and Ramnarain Singh in one breath as men too self-righteous to be trusted!

"What proof have we against him?" he demanded.

"Try him by court martial!" Ramnarain Singh screwed up courage to answer. "Call for witnesses against him and hear them!"

"Who can try a dead man by court martial?" he thundered back. "He left us to go and be our hostage, for our safety—for the safety of your ungrateful skins! He died a hostage, given by us to savages. They killed him. Are ye worse savages than they? Which of our dead lie dishonored anywhere? Have they not all had burning or else burial? Are ye judges of the dead? Or are ye content to live like men? Take him down, and lay him out for burial! His brother daffadars shall dig his grave!"

Aye, sahib. So he gave the order, and so we obeyed, saying no more, but digging a trench for Gooja Singh with bayonets, working together turn and turn about, I, who had been all along his enemy, doing the lion's share of the work and thinking of the talks he and I had had, and the disputes. And here was the outcome! Aye.

It was not a very deep trench but it served, and we laid him in it with his feet toward India, and covered him, and packed the earth down tight. Then we burned on the grave the tree to which he had been crucified, and piled a great cairn of stones above him. There we left him, on the roof of a great mountain that looks down on Persia.

It was perhaps two hours, or it may have been three after burying Gooja Singh—we rode on in silence thinking of him, our wounded groaning now and then, but even the words of command being given by sign instead of speech because none cared to speak—that we learned the explanation, and more with it.

We found a good place to camp, and proceeded to make it defensible and to gather fuel. Then some of the women belonging to our Kurdish friends overtook us, and with them a few of our Kurdish wounded and some unwounded ones who had returned to glean again on the battle-field. These brought with them two prisoners whom we set in the midst, and then Abraham was set to work translating until his tongue must have almost fallen out with weariness. Bit by bit we pieced a tale together that had reason in it and so brought us understanding.

Our first guess had been right; the Turks had already sent—some said a full division—to wreak vengeance for our plundering of the gold. The Kurds of those parts, who fight among themselves like wild beasts, nevertheless will always stand together to fight Turks; therefore those who had been attacking us were now behind us with thousands of other Kurds from the tribes all about, waiting to dispute the passes with the common enemy. They considered us an insignificant handful, to be dealt with later on.

The woman said the battle had not begun; and the prisoners bade our Kurds swallow tribal enmity and hurry to do their share!

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The chief listened to them, saying nothing. Has the sahib ever watched a savage thinking, while lust drew him one way and pride another? Truly an interesting sight!

But the rest of the men were too interested to learn the reason of Gooja Singh's torture and death to care for the workings of a Kurdish chief's conscience. They crowded closer and closer, interrupting with shouted questions and bidding each other be still. So Ranjoor Singh said a word to Abraham and he changed the line of questioning. The truth was soon out.

Gooja Singh, it seemed, probably not believing we had one chance in a million, decided to contrive safety for himself. So with one Kurd to help him he escaped in the night, and went and found Wassmuss in a Kurdish village in the mountains. He told Wassmuss who we were, and whence we were, and what we intended. So Wassmuss—who must be a very remarkable man indeed—although a prisoner, exerted so much persuasion forthwith that three hundred Kurds consented to escort the party of Germans there and then to Afghanistan. He promised them I know not what reward, but the point is they consented, and within eight hours of Gooja Singh's arrival the German party was on its way.

Then Wassmuss sent the thousand Kurds to deal with us; but as I have told, we beat them. And that made the Kurds who held Wassmuss prisoner extremely angry with Gooja Singh; so they made him prisoner too. And then, by signal and galloper and shouts from crag to crag came word that the Turks were marching in force to invade the mountains, and instantly they turned on Gooja Singh and would have torn him in pieces for being a spy of the Turks sent on ahead to prepare the way. But some cooler head than the rest urged to put him to the torture, and they agreed.

Whether or not Gooja Singh declared under torture that we were Turks we could not get to know, but it is certain that the Kurds decided we were Turks, whatever Wassmuss swore to the contrary; and doubtless he swore furiously! And because they believed us to be Turks they let us be for the present, sure that we would try to make our way back if they could keep the main Turkish forces from regaining touch with us.

And Gooja Singh they presently crucified in a place where we would almost surely see him, thinking thus to surprise us with the information that all was known, and to frighten us into a state of comparative harmlessness—a favorite Kurdish trick.

That did not account for everything. It did not account for our victory over Turks in the hailstorm and our plunder of the Turks' camp and capture of the gold. But none had seen that raid because of the storm, and the spies who had said they talked with our men in the night were now disbelieved. Our presence in the hills and Gooja Singh's escape was all set down to Turkish trickery; and doubtless they did not believe we truly had gold with us, or they would have detached at least a party to follow up and keep in touch.

The clearest thing of all that the disjointed scraps of tale betrayed was that we were in luck! If the Kurds believed us to be Turks, they would let us wander at will, if only for the humor and sport of hunting us down when we should try to break back.

"No need to waste more labor setting this camp to rights!" said I. "We shall rest a little and be up and away again!"

And the wounded groaned, and some objected, but I proved right. Ranjoor Singh was no man to study comfort when opportunity showed itself. We rested two hours, and during those two hours our friend the Kurdish chief made up his mind, and he and Ranjoor Singh struck a new bargain.

"Give me the gold!" said he. "Keep the hostages and ten of my men to guide you, and send them back when you are two days into Persia. I go to fight against the Turks!"

Well, they bargained, and bargained. Ranjoor Singh offered him his choice of a chest of gold then and there, or four-fifths of the whole in Persia; and in the end he agreed to take three chests of gold then and there, and to leave us the hostages and thirty men to see us on our way.

"For," said Ranjoor Singh, "how should the hostages and my prisoners return to you safely otherwise?"

So we kept two chests of gold, and found them right useful presently. And we said good-by to him and his men, and put out our own fires and rode eastward. And of the next few days there is nothing to tell except furious marching and very little sleep—nor much to eat either.

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ONCE we were well into Persia we bought food right and left, paying fabulous prices for it with gold from our looted chests. Here and there we traded a plundered rifle for a new horse, sometimes for two new horses. Here and there a wounded man would die and we would burn his body—for now there was fuel in plenty.

Day after day, night after night Ranjoor Singh kept in the saddle hunting tirelessly for news of the party of Germans on ahead of us. Their track was clear as daylight and on the fifth day—or was it the sixth?—after we entered Persia he learned at last that we were only a day or two behind them. Like us, they were in a hurry; but unlike us they had no Ranjoor Singh to force the pace and do the scouting, so that for all their long lead we were overtaking them.

Like us they seemed wary of the public eye, for they followed lonely routes among the wooded foothills; but their Kurdish horsemen left a track no blind man could have missed, and although they plundered a little as they went, they spent gold, too, like water, so that the villagers were in a strange mood. Most of the plundering was done by their Kurdish escort, who, it seemed, kept returning to steal the money paid by the Germans for provisions. Sometimes when we offered gold we would be mocked. But on the whole we began to have an easy time of it—all but the wounded, who suffered tortures from the pace we held. We secured some carts at one village and put our wounded in them, but the carts were springless, and there were no roads at all, so that it was better in those days to be a dead man than a sick or wounded one! There was no malingering.

After a few days—I forget how many, for who can remember all the days and distances of that long march?—Abraham got word of a great Christian mission where thousands of Christians had sought safety under the American flag. He and his Syrians elected to try their fortune there, and we let them go, all of us saluting Abraham for he was a good, brave man, fearful, but able to overcome his fear and intelligent far beyond the ordinary. We let the Syrians take their rifles and some ammunition with them, because Abraham said they might be called on perhaps to help defend the mission.

Not long after that we let our Kurds go, giving up our Turkish officer prisoners and Tugendheim as well. We all knew by that time what our final goal was, and Tugendheim begged to be allowed to go with us all the way. But Ranjoor Singh refused him.

"I promised you to the Kurd, and the Kurd will trade you to Wassmuss against his brother," he said. "Tell Wassmuss whatever lies you like, and make your peace with your own folk however you can. Here is your paper."

Tugendheim took the paper—You remember, sahib, he had signed a receipt in conjunction with the Turkish mate and captain of that ship in which we escaped from Stamboul—Well, he took the paper back, and burned it in the little fire by which I was sitting facing Ranjoor Singh.

"Let me go with you!" he urged. "It will be rope or bullet for me if ever I get back to Germany!"

"Nevertheless," said Ranjoor Singh, "I promised to deliver you to Wassmuss when we made you prisoner in the first place. I must keep my word to you."

"I release you from your word to me!" said Tugendheim.

"And I promised you to the Kurdish chief," said Ranjoor Singh.

"The Kurdish chief?" said Tugendheim. "What of him? What of it? Why, why, why—he is a savage—scarcely human—not to be weighed in the scales against a civilized man! What does such a promise as that amount to?" And he stood tugging at his mustaches as if he would tear them out.

"I have some gold left," said Ranjoor Singh, when he was sure Tugendheim had no more to say, "and I had seriously thought of buying you for gold from these Kurds. There may be one of them who would take on himself the responsibility of speaking for his chief. But since you hold my given word so light as that I must look more nearly to my honor. Nay, go with the Kurds, Sergeant Tugendheim!"

Tugendheim made a great wail. He begged for this, and he begged for that. He begged us to give him a letter to Wassmuss explaining that we had compelled him by threats of torture. He begged for gold. And Ranjoor Singh gave him a little gold. Some of us put in a word for him, for on that long journey he had told many a tale to make us laugh. He had suffered with us. He had helped us more than a little by drilling the Syrians, and often his presence with

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us had saved our skins by convincing Turkish scouts of our bona fides. We thought of Gooja Singh, and had no wish that Tugendheim should meet a like fate. So, perhaps because we all begged for him, or perhaps because he so intended in the first place, Ranjoor Singh relented.

"The Persians hereabouts," he said, "all tell me that a great Russian army will come down presently from the north. Have I heard correctly that you meditated escape into Russia?"

Tugendheim answered—

"How should I reach Russia?"

"That is thy affair!" said Ranjoor Singh. "But here is more gold," and he counted out to him ten more golden German coins. "You must ride back with these Kurds, but I have no authority over them. They are not my men. They seem to like gold more than most things."

So Tugendheim ceased begging for himself and rode away rather despondently in the midst of the Kurds; and we followed about a day and a half behind the German party with their strange box-full of machinery. There were many of us who could talk Persian, and as we stopped in the villages to beg or buy curdled milk, and as we rounded up the cattle-herdsmen and the women by the wells we heard many strange and wonderful stories about what the engine in that box could do.

I observed that Ranjoor Singh looked merry-eyed when the wildest stories reached him; but we all began to reflect on the disastrous consequences of letting such crafty people reach Afghanistan. For, as doubtless the sahib knows, the Amir of Afghanistan has a very great army; and if he were to decide that the German side is after all the winning one he might make very much trouble for the Government of India.

And now there was no longer any doubt that the machine slung in the box between two mules was a wireless telegraph, and that most of the other mules were loaded with accessories. The tales we heard could not be made to tally with any other explanation. And what, said we, was to prevent the Germans in Stamboul from signaling whatever lies they could invent to this party in Afghanistan, supposing they should ever reach the country? Yet when we argued thus with Ranjoor Singh, he laughed.

And then, after about a week of marching, came Tugendheim back to us, ragged and thirsty and nearly dead, on a horse more dead than he. He had bought himself free from the Kurds with the gold Ranjoor Singh gave him; but because he had no more gold the Persians had refused to feed him. How should he find his way alone to meet the Russians, he said, whose scouts would probably shoot him on sight in any case? So we laughed, and let him rest among our wounded and be one of us—aye, one of us; for who were we to turn him away to starve? He had served us well, and he served us well again.

Has the sahib heard of Bakhtiari Khans? They are people as fierce as Kurds, who live like the Kurds by plundering. The Germans ahead of us, doubtless because Persia is neutral in this war and therefore they had no conceivable right to be crossing the country, chose a route that avoided all towns and cities of considerable size. And Persia seems to have no army any more, so that there was no official opposition. But the Bakhtiari Khans received word of what was doing and after that there were new problems. But for the fact that Tugendheim was with us in his ragged German uniform we should have had more trouble than we did.

AT FIRST the Khans were content with blackmail, holding up the Germans at intervals and demanding money. But I suppose that finally their money all gave out, and then the Khans put threats into practise. But before actual skirmishing began the Khans would come to us, after getting money from the Germans and it was only the fact that we had Tugendheim to show that convinced them we belonged to the party ahead. Ranjoor Singh claimed that our transit fee had been paid for us already, and the Khans did not deny it.

But they caught up the Germans again and demanded money from them because of us who were following, and I have laughed many a time to think of the predicament that put them in. For could they deny all knowledge of us? In that case they might be denying useful allies in their hour of need. If the Bakhtiari Khans should annihilate us their own fate would not be likely to tremble in the balance very long. Yet if they admitted knowledge of us, what might that not lead to? And how was it

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possible for them to know really who we were in any case?

Finally they sent one of their Kurdish servants back to find us and ask questions. And to him we showed Tugendheim, and spoke to him at great length in Persian of which he understood very little; so that when he overtook his own party again—if he ever did, for the Khans were on the prowl and very cruel and savage—they may have been more in the dark about us than ever.

At last the Bakhtiari Khans began guerrilla warfare, and the Kurds who were escorting them retaliated by burning and plundering the villages by which they passed —which incensed the Khans yet more, because they did not belong to that part of Persia and had counted on the plunder for themselves. From time to time we caught Bakhtiari Khans, and though they spoke poor Persian some of us could understand them. They explained that the Persian Government, being very weak, made use of them to terrorize whatever section of the country seemed rebellious—surely a sad way to govern a land!

There were not very many of the Khans. They are used for raiding in parties of thirty or fifty, or perhaps a hundred. I think there were not many more of them than of the German party and us combined; and at that the Bakhtiari Khans were all divided into independent troops. So that the danger was not so serious as it seemed. But guerrilla warfare is very trying to the nerves, and if we had not had Ranjoor Singh to lead us we should have failed in the end; for we were fighting in a strange land, with no base to fall back on and nothing to do but press forward.

The Kurds, too, who escorted the Germans began to grow sick of it. Little parties of them began to pass us on their way home, giving us a wide berth, but passing close enough nevertheless to get some sort of protection from our proximity, and the numbers of those parties grew and grew until we laughed at the thought of what anxiety the Germans must be suffering. Yet Ranjoor Singh grew anxious too, for the Khans grew bolder. It began to look as if neither Germans nor we would ever reach half-way to the Afghan border.

Ranjoor Singh was the finest leader men could have, but we were being sniped eternally, men falling wounded here and there until scarcely one of us but had a hurt of some kind—to say nothing of our sick. Men grew sick from bad food, and unaccustomed food, and hard riding, and exposure. Our little Greek doctor took sick and died, and we had nothing but ignorance left with which to treat our ailments. We began to be a sorry-looking regiment indeed.

Nevertheless, the ignorance helped, for at least we did not know how serious our wounds were. I myself received one bullet that passed through both ankles, and it is not likely I shall ever walk again without a limp. Yet if I can ride what does that matter as long as the Government has horses? And if a man limps in both feet wherein is he the loser? Mine was a slight wound compared to some of them. We had come to a poor pass, but Ranjoor Singh's good sense saved the day again.

There came a day when the Bakhtiari Khans gave us a terrible last attention and then left us—as it turned out for good—although we did not know then it was for good. We watched their dust as their different troops gathered together and rode away southward. I suppose they had received word of better opportunity for plunder somewhere else; they took little but hard knocks from us, and doubtless any change was welcome.

When we had seen the last of them, and had watched the vultures swoop down on a horse they left behind, we took new heart and rode on; and it so happened that the Germans chose that occasion for a rest. Their dwindling Kurdish escort was growing mutinous and they took advantage of a village with high mud walls to get behind cover and try to reestablish confidence.

Perhaps they, too, saw the Bakhtiari Khans retiring in the distance, for we were close behind them at that time—so close that even with tired horses we came on them before they could properly defend themselves. We knocked a hole in the wall and had a good, wide breach established in no time, to save ourselves trouble in case the gates should prove too strongly held; and leaving Anim Singh posted in the breach with his troop, Ranjoor Singh sent a trooper with a white flag to the main gate.

After ten or fifteen minutes the German commanding officer rode out, also with a white flag, and not knowing that Ranjoor Singh knew German, he spoke English—Tugendheim had taken his tunic off and all sweaty and trembling had hidden behind

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the ranks disguised with a cloth tied about his head—I sat my horse beside Ranjoor Singh, so I heard all.

"Persia is neutral territory!" said the German.

"Are you, then, neutral?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Are you?" asked the German.

He was a handsome, bullet-headed man with a bold eye, and I knew that to browbeat or to trick him would be no easy matter. Nevertheless he still had so many Kurds at his back that I doubted our ability to get the better of him in a fight, considering our condition.

"I could be neutral if I saw fit," answered Ranjoor Singh, and the German's eyes glittered.

"If you are neutral, ride on then!" he laughed. I saw his eye-teeth. It was a mean laugh.

"What are you doing here?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Minding my business," said the German pointedly.

"Then I will mind mine and investigate," said Ranjoor Singh, and he turned to me as if to give an order, at which the German changed his tactics in a hurry.

"My business is simple," said the German. "Perfectly simple and perfectly neutral. We have a wireless installation with us. It is all ready set up in this village. In a few moments we shall be receiving messages from Europe, and then we shall inform the inhabitants of these parts how matters stand. As neutrals they are entitled to that information."

Their eyes met, each seeking to read the other's mind, and the German misunderstood, as most Germans I have met do misunderstand.

"Before we can receive a message we shall send one," said the German. "Before I came out to meet you I gave the order to get in touch with Constantinople and signal this: That we are being interfered with and our lives are endangered on neutral territory by troops belonging to British India, and therefore that all British Indian prisoners-of-war in Germany should be made hostages for our safety. That means," he went on, "that unless we signal every day that all is well a number of your countrymen in Germany corresponding to the number of my party will be lined up against a wall and shot."

"So that message has been sent?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"Yes," said the German.

"Then send this message also," said Ranjoor Singh: "That the end has certainly come. Then close up your machine because unless you wish to fight for your existence there will be no more messages sent or received by you between here and Afghanistan."

I thought that a strange message for Ranjoor Singh to bid him send. I did not believe that one of us, however weary, was willing to accept relief at the price of our friends' lives. Nevertheless I said nothing, having learned it is not wise to draw too swift conclusions when Ranjoor Singh directs the strategy.

But the German evidently thought so too, for his eyes looked startled, and I took comfort from that.

"I understand you wish to reach Afghanistan?" asked Ranjoor Singh.

"That is our eventual destination," said the German.

"Very well," said Ranjoor Singh. "Pack up your machine. Then I will permit your journey to the Afghan border, unhampered by me, on two conditions."

"What two conditions?" asked the German.

"That your machine shall remain packed up until you reach Afghanistan, and that your doctor shall divide his services until then equally between your men and mine."

"And after that what?" asked the German.

"I have nothing to do with Afghanistan," said Ranjoor Singh. "Keep the bargain and you are free as far as I am concerned to do what you like when you get there."

So we had a doctor again at last, for the German agreed to the terms. Not one of us but needed medical aid, and the men were too glad to have their hurts attended, to ask very many questions; but they were certainly surprised, and suspicious of the new arrangements, and I did not dare tell them what I had overheard for fear lest suspicion of Ranjoor Singh be reawakened.

I refused even to tell the other daffadars, which caused some slight estrangement between them and me. However, Ranjoor Singh was as conscious of that risk as I, and during all the rest of the long march he kept their camp and ours, their column and ours, half an hour's ride apart—sometimes even farther—sometimes half a day apart, to the

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disgust of the doctor who had that much more trouble, but with the result of preventing greater friction.

TO TELL of all that journey across Persia would be but to remember weariness—weariness of horse and man. Sometimes we were attacked; more often we were run away from. We grew sick, our wounds festered and our hearts ached. Horses died and the vultures ate them. Men died, and we buried or burned their bodies according or not as we had fuel. We dried, as it were, like the bone-dry trail we followed, and only Ranjoor Singh's heart was stout; only he was brave; only he had a song on his lips. He coaxed us, and cheered us, and rallied us. The strength of the regiment was but his strength, and as for the other party, who hung on our flank, or lagged behind us or preceded us by half a day, their Kurds deserted by fives and tens until there was scarcely a corporal's guard remaining.

They must have been as weary as we, and as glad as we when at last at the end of a long-drawn afternoon we saw an Afghan sentinel.

Has the sahib ever seen an Afghan sentry?

This one was gray and old and sat on his gray pony like a huddled ape with a tattered umbrella over his shoulder and his rifle across his knees. He looked less like a sentry than like a dead man dug up and set there to scare the birds away. But he was efficient, no doubt of that. He had seen us and passed on word of us the minute we showed on the skyline, and the hills all about him were full of armed men waiting to give us a hot reception if necessary, and to bar further progress in any case.

So there we had to camp, just over the Afghan border, but farther apart from the Germans than ever—two, three miles apart, for now it became Ranjoor Singh's policy to know nothing whatever about them.

The Afghans provided us with rations and sent us one of their own doctors dressed in the uniform of a tram-car conductor; and their highest official in those parts, whose rank I could not guess because he was arrayed in the costume of a city of London policeman, asked innumerable questions first of Ranjoor Singh and then of each of us individually. But we conferred together, and stuck to one point, that we knew nothing. Ranjoor Singh did not know better than we. The more he asked the more dumb we became until, perhaps with a view to loosing our tongues, the Afghans who mingled among us in the camp began telling what the Germans were saying and doing on the rise two miles away.

They had their machine set up said they. They were receiving messages, said they, with this wonderful wireless telegraph of theirs. They kept receiving hourly news of disasters to the allied arms by land and sea. And we were fearfully disturbed about all this, because we knew how important it must be for India's safety that Afghanistan continue neutral. And why should such savages continue neutral if they were once persuaded that the winning side was that of the Central Powers? Nevertheless Ranjoor Singh appeared to grow more and more contented and I wondered. Some of the men began to murmur.

In that camp we remained, if I rightly remember, six days. And then came word from Habibullah Kahn the Afghan Ameer that we might draw nearer Khabul. So keeping our distance from the Germans we helped one another into the saddle—so weak most of us were by that time—and went forward three days march. Then we camped again, much closer to the Germans this time, in fact almost within shouting distance; and they again set up their machine, causing sparks to crackle from the wires of a telescopic tower they raised, to the very great concern of the Afghans who were in and out of both camps all day long.

One message, that an Afghan told me the Germans had received, was that the British fleet was all sunk and Paris taken. But that sort of message seemed to me familiar so that I was not so depressed by it as my Afghan informant had hoped. He went off to procure yet more appalling news to bring me, and no doubt was accommodated.

I should have had burning ears, but that at about that time, their Ameer came, Habibullah Kahn, looking like a European in his neatly fitting clothes, but surrounded by a staff of officers dressed in greater variety of uniforms than one would have believed to exist. He had brought with him his engineers to view this wonderful machine, but before approaching either camp—perhaps to show impartiality—he sent for the German chief and one, and for Ranjoor Singh and one. So, since the German took his doctor,

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Ranjoor Singh took me, he and I both riding, and the Ameer graciously excusing me from dismounting when I had made him my salaam and he had learned the nature of the wound.

After some talk the Ameer asked us bluntly whence we came and what our business might be, and Ranjoor Singh answered him we were escaped prisoners of war. Then he turned on the German, and the German told him that because the British had seen fit to cut off Afghanistan from all true news of what was happening in the world outside, therefore the German government, knowing well the open mind and bravery and wisdom of the Ameer and his subjects, had sent himself at very great trouble and expense to receive true messages from Europe and so acquaint with the true state of affairs a ruler and people with whom Germany desired before all things to be on friendly terms.

After that we all went down in a body, perhaps a hundred men with the Ameer at our head, to the German camp; and there the German and his officers displayed the machine to the Ameer who, with a dozen of his staff around him, appeared more amused than astonished.

So the Germans set their machine in motion. The sparks made much crackling from the wires, at which the Ameer laughed aloud. Presently the German chief read off a message from Berlin conveying the Kaiser's compliments to his Highness the Ameer.

"Is that message from Berlin?" the Ameer asked and I thought I heard one of his officers chuckle.

"Yes, your Highness," said the German officer.

"Is it not relayed from anywhere?" the Ameer asked, and the German stared at him swiftly—thus, as if for the first time his own suspicions were aroused.

"From Stamboul, your Highness—relayed from Stamboul," he said, as one who make concessions.

The Ameer chuckled softly to himself and smiled.

"These are my engineers," said he, "all college trained. They tell me our wireless installation at Khabul, which connects us through Simla with Calcutta and the world beyond, is a very good one, yet it will only reach to Simla, although I should say it is a hundred times as large as yours, and although we have an enormous dynamo to give the energy as against your box of batteries."

The Germans, who were clustered all about their chief, kept straight faces but their eyes popped round and their mouths grew stiff with the effort to suppress emotion.

"This, your Highness, is the last new invention," said the German chief.

"Then my engineers shall look at it," said the Ameer, "for we wish to keep abreast of the inventions. As you remarked just now we are a little shut off from the world. We must not let slip such opportunities for education."

And then and there he made his engineers go forward to inspect everything, he scarcely concealing his merriment; and the Germans stood aside looking like thieves caught in the act while the workings were disclosed of such a wireless apparatus as might serve to teach beginners.

"It might serve perhaps between one village and the next, while the batteries persisted," they said, reporting to the Ameer presently. The Ameer laughed but I thought he looked puzzled—perplexed, rather than displeased. He turned to Ranjoor Singh:

"And are you a liar too?" he asked.

"Nay, your royal Highness, I speak truth," said Ranjoor Singh, saluting him in military manner.

"Then what do you wish?" asked the Ameer. "Do you wish to be interned, seeing this is neutral soil on which you trespass?"

"Nay, your Royal Highness," answered Ranjoor Singh with a curt laugh, "we have had enough of prison camps."

"Then what shall be done with you?" the Ameer asked. "Here are men from both sides, and how shall I be neutral?"

The German chief stepped forward and saluted.

"Your Royal Highness, we desire to be interned," he said. But the Ameer glowered savagely.

"Peace!" said he. "I asked you nothing; one string of lies was enough! I asked thee a question," he said, turning again to Ranjoor Singh.

"Since your Royal Highness asks," said Ranjoor Singh, "it would be a neutral act to let us each leave your dominions by whichever road we will!"

The Ameer laughed and turned to his attendants who laughed with him.

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"That is good," said he. "So let it be. It is an order!"

So it came about, sahib, that the Germans and ourselves were ordered hot-foot out of the Ameer's country. But whereas there was only one way the Germans could go, viz., back into Persia, there to help themselves as best they could, the road Ranjoor Singh chose was forward to the Khyber Pass, and so down into India.

Aye, sahib, down into India! It was a long road, but the Afghans were very kind to us, providing us with food and blankets and giving some of us new horses for our weary ones, and so we came at last to Landi Kotal at the head of the Khyber, where a long-legged English sahib heard our story and said "*Shabash!*" to Ranjoor Singh—that means, "Well done, sahib!"

And so we marched down the Khyber, they signaling ahead that we were coming. We slept at Ali Masjid because neither horse nor man could move another yard, but at dawn next day we were off again. And because they had notice of our coming they turned out the troops, a division strong, to greet us, and we took the salute of a whole division as we had taken it once in Flanders, Ranjoor Singh sitting his charger like a graven image, and we—one hundred-three-and-forty men and the prisoner Tugendheim, who had left India eight hundred strong—reeling in the saddle from sickness and fatigue, while a roar went up in Khyber throat such as I scarcely hope to hear again before I die.

Once in a lifetime, sahib, once is enough. They had their bands with them. The same tune burst on our ears that had greeted us that first night of our charge in Flanders, and we—great bearded men—we wept like little ones. They played "It is a long, long way to Tipperary."

Then because we were cavalry and entitled to the same, they gave us "Bonnie Dundee" and the horses cantered to it; but some of us rolled from the saddle in sheer weakness. Then we halted in something like a line, and a general rode up to shake hands with Ranjoor Singh and to say things in our tongue that may not be repeated, for they were words from heart to heart. And I remember little more, for I too swooned and fell from the saddle.

THE shadows darkened and grew one into another. Hira Singh sat drawing silently in the dust, with his injured feet stretched out in front of him. A monkey in the giant tree above us shook down a little shower of twigs and dirt. A trumpet blared. There began much business of closing tents and reducing the camp to superhuman tidiness.

"So, sahib," he said at last, "they come to carry me in. It is time my tale is ended. Ranjoor Singh they have made Bahadur. God grant him his desire! May my son be such a man as he, when his day comes.

"Me? They say I shall be made commissioned officer—the law is changed since this great war began. Yet what did I do compared to what Ranjoor Singh did? Each is his own witness and God alone is judge. Does the sahib know what this war is all about?

"I believe no two men fight for the same thing. It is a war in each man's heart, each man is fighting as the spirit moves him. So. They come for me. *Salaam*, sahib. *Bohut salaam*. May God grant the sahib peace. Peace to the sahib's grandsons and great-grandsons. With each arm thus around a trooper's neck will the sahib graciously excuse me from saluting?"

THE END.

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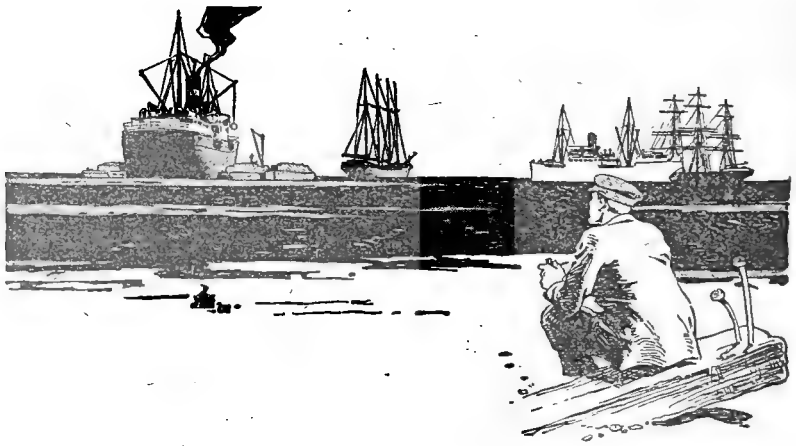

A TIME-EXPIRED MAN

by JOHN G. GARTLAND

I COALED the ship and I scrubbed down decks,
And I worked like an army mule—
For the outfit isn't a dress parade;
It's a hard and bitter school;
They gave me the steel of the stabbin' word,
And the weight of the iron han';
They gave me the gaff of the belt and boot—
But they drilled me into a man.

They put me into the training-school
Before they gave me my blues;
They taught me to drill and to scrub my clothes,
Then they sent me out on a cruise;
They taught me to read and write and spell,
And to handle a twelve-inch gun;
I learned my lesson and learned it well—
And it wasn't all of it fun.

I didn't learn much of the Golden Rule
And I didn't learn much about prayer,
But I learned the iron rules of the game
Where they play it on the square;
I learned a lot that's not down in the Book
Afloat on the naked spray—
For the sea puts fear in the boldest hearts
And grit in the meanest clay.

I've cruised in the far Alaska seas
Where the iron-shod icebergs churn;
I've stood my watch 'neath the Southern Cross
With the waves afire astern;
I've sweltered on Guantanamo beach
For full six months in the sheer
With never the sight of a woman's face
Nor the smell of gin or beer.

I've been in the House of the Thousand Steps
In the land of the Japanee,
Takin' my tea with a Geisha Girl—
And I've been upon the spree
At the God-forsaken ends of the earth
With a God-forsaken crew,
And I've done all the God-forsaken things
That a sailor-man will do.

I've learned to polish the bright-work clean
As the face of a mission saint,
And I've learned to look on the sight of blood
Without turnin' sick and faint;
I've rolled the bones and I've turned the cards,
And I've taken my pay-day swig;
I've broken shore liberty once or twice,
And I've done my time in the brig.

I've done my share of hoppin' about
With the girls on Avon Street,
And they're the devil's own pirate-crew—
But on one I was passin' sweet.
And now it's all over and put behind,
And I'm a civilian once more—
But I can't forget and I *won't* forget
Tho' I'm anchored snug a-shore.

I coaled the ship and I scrubbed down decks
And I worked like an army mule,
For the outfit isn't a dress parade—
It's a hard and bitter school;
They gave me the steel of the stabbin' word,
And the weight of the iron han';
They gave me the gaff of the belt and boot—
But they drilled me into a man.

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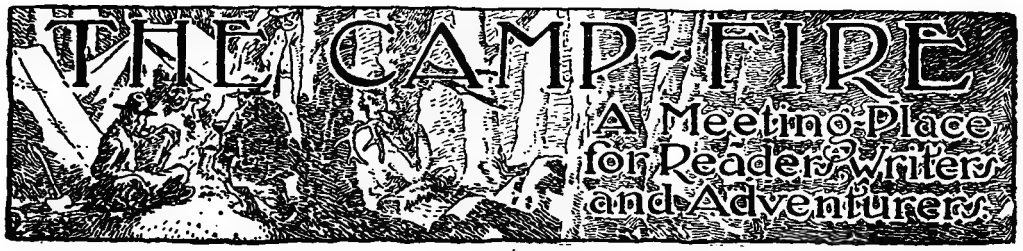

OUR Camp-Fire investigation into the ultimate fate of the old-time pioneer of the West continues to bring interesting contributions from those of you who are in touch with the facts in the various cases. Taking us all together, we are a pretty thorough and far-reaching investigation bureau.

Here is a letter from E. A. Brininstool, author of "Trail Dust of a Maverick," a collection of cowboy poems and verses of the cattle-range and desert with which many of you are already familiar:

DEAR SIR:

In the August issue of your magazine I note some remarks about some of the old-timers of the plains, and among them "Calamity Jane." I have an old-time picture of her taken at the height of her fame, which was given me by an old scout friend of mine who conducted a trading store on the Pine Ridge reservation during the Ghost Dance war of 1890-91. "Calamity" at one time saved my friend's life, and he always felt very grateful toward her.

Now about "Curley," Custer's Crow scout. I was on the Crow reservation at Crow Agency, Montana, in September, 1913, and went all over the Custer battlefield with him. I took several pictures of him and still have them. He was fifty-eight years old at that time, and I believe is yet living in his log cabin along the Little Big Horn, as he was then. I bought a beautiful buckskin coat off his back that day, and have it in my collection of Indian stuff in Exposition Park, Los Angeles.

AS TO Frank Gruard, there is a lady in Sheridan, Wyoming, Mrs. Judge T. J. Foster, who is a life-long friend of Gruard's, and she had in her possession in 1913 a book entitled "The Life and Adventures of Frank Gruard." I have tried in vain to get a copy of it, but it is out of print, I suppose. In John Finerty's book, "War Path and Bivouac," which is an account of the Sioux campaign of '76, is given a story which puts Gruard to the front among all the scouts of the plains. He guided what was known later as the "Sibley scout," a detachment of some twenty-five men under comman of Lieut. Fred Sibley, who went out on a scouting expedition. These men were attacked by a large war-party of Sioux under White Antelope, and but for the skill and knowledge of the country, as well as the tactics of the Sioux, which Gruard possessed, not a man of the bunch would have come through alive. This happened in the neighborhood of Big Goose Creek, somewhere in the Big Horn country, I believe. Another well-known scout who was with that party was Baptiste Pourier, known as "Big Bat" to distinguish him from another scout called "Little Bat." I do not know if Gruard is alive. I have tried to learn his history and more about him, for he was reckoned as a "humdinger" of a plainsman. He was born in the South Sea Islands, I am told, and was captured by the Sioux when a boy and lived with them for years, hence his knowledge of that race, which came in mighty handy in his scouting career. Possibly Mrs. Foster knows if Gruard is alive.

IN THIS same book of Finerty's is an account of the fight at Slim Buttes, where "Buffalo Chips" White was killed. Finerty was standing not very far from White at the time. Finerty, by the way, was accompanying Crook's command as war correspondent for the Chicago *Times*, and his book is by far the best account of the '76 Sioux campaign that I have ever got hold of.

Another book which gives much information about the old-timers of Arizona and New Mexico, with a full account of the notorious Lincoln County war of New Mexico, is "The Story of the Outlaw," by Emerson Hough. This has a full account of the life and "killin's" of "Billy the Kid," who was shot and killed by Pat Garrett in 1881, with other histories of noted bad men and gun-fighters of the early '80's.

I have quite a large collection of old-time Indian stuff, among it being the most beautiful war-bonnet I have ever seen. I have also a big lot of photos of the old-time chiefs who were pulling hair in the early '70's. I have a section of one of the old stockade posts of old Fort Phil Kearny, which I cut down myself on the site of the old stockade ground twenty-three miles southeast of Sheridan, Wyoming, where I found several of the stockade posts protruding two or three feet above the ground in 1913. I am very much interested in the Indian question and the lives of the old-time frontiersmen and scouts.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

And here is a letter in reply to the one from D. Wiggins we published in August, which gave an account of the killing of Pat Garrett:

Apalachin, N. Y.

Please allow me to correct an injustice in your columns. What you say of the killing of Pat Garrett—that it "seems to have been a cowardly assassination, etc.,—page 182, August *Adventure*,

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is quite unwarranted by the facts. I am sending you cross-examination and some of the local papers.

PAT GARRETT was a very good friend of mine, and a first-rate man. So was young Wayne Brazee, who killed him. The latter went to school with me. I knew Pat twenty-five years and Wayne since he wore his first trousers. The latter was about the most peaceable man I knew. I am very sorry for Pat's death, but he would have been the last man to have wished this false report to go out.

Please read the evidence. In my opinion, Pat had no idea of shooting Wayne. He presumed on his prestige. He thought if he reached for his shotgun Wayne would weaken. If Pat's mind had been set on shooting, he would have shot. I guess it was the only bluff Pat ever attempted. Wayne supposed he meant business. It isn't customary in New Mexico vicinity to suppose that any man is bluffing. It is too bad.

I ALSO enclose full description of gun Pat had in his hands when he died. Note that it was a "folding rifle," etc. Probably it didn't work.

Kindly return clippings. They are part of an incredible epic—which will never be written by any man because partisans on either side distorted all evidence, as in two instances.—EUGENE M. RHODES.

Next, another letter on the killing of King Fisher and Ben Thompson:

Montreal, Canada.

In the first September issue I note in the Camp-Fire your letter *re* Ben Thompson and King Fisher. Thought probably it might interest you to have a version from one who saw part of the shooting, etc.

AT THE time I was employed at Wolfson's dry goods store (see rough diagram) and about 3:30 afternoon heard shooting in the Plaza. An officer was stationed in the doorway of what I have marked "bank," and the others were on the corner near cigar store. Billy Sims, manager, and brother-in-law of Jack Harris, was in doorway of vaudeville house. Not much damage done then, but at night Thompson got into show and shooting started. Sims and his friends being ready, King Fisher shot dead at once. Thompson mortally wounded. Sims shot in thighs, afterward died. People by the thousand came in to San Antonio to view bodies, in fact, a regular gala time.

Probably your correspondent will remember the cigar-lighter in the cigar store that occasioned such comment.—C. C. KYNNERSLEY.

FURTHER information from a number of sources in this country and in the Canal Zone makes me refer again to the treasure-expedition that started for Cocos Island under Captain Jim Steele but got no farther than the Zone. I have already stated that neither this magazine or any one connected with it ever had any connection with this expedition except in the formal and impersonal way already explained. I want to add now, in the light of the information that has since come to me, that I do not advise any one to take part in any expedition led by Captain Jim Steele. I have no right to advise you not to take part, but I certainly do not advise you to do so.

IN CONNECTION with his story in this issue Hugh Pendexter gives us some interesting bits about our Indians and borderers of a century or two ago:

The Cherokees commenced war on the English colonies in Carolina in 1759, fought against the Americans during the Revolution and up till 1794. The crystal was a hunting fetish of the Cherokees and was kept in a cave and smeared with blood. The Ordeal of the Mouse was practised by the mystery men, or sorcerers. Aganstata in later years was a notable war chief and fought the English. Also spelled Oconustata. The introduction of the "scissors hold" is licensed, as the borderers of the eighteenth century, while often lacking skill in boxing, were invariably skilled wrestlers. For me that period is filled with romance and especially fascinating are the eccentric whorls in the Indian mind, with the most notable red leaders swayed by conditional causes and apt to diverge at right angles to consistency at any moment. Perhaps needless to add, the correct English equivalent is given the Cherokee names, viz.: Galanega, Aganstata, etc. Also clan names.

WORD from one of our American comrades in the British flying corps, in England after service on the western front:

July 17, 1917.

Just one more trial to get another letter through to you, as I know that my last one was held up by the Censor, and I was under "open arrest" awaiting court martial for a matter of three weeks for telling you a few truths regarding the system of the British Army in general and the R. F. C. in particular, but they seemed to have let the matter drop, as I had too good a case.

I GRADUATED as First-Class Pilot some time ago and have been instructing Russian cadets on Curtiss J. N. 4s until I got "fed up" about a week ago. The hours were too long, and too little sleep was fast wrecking my already broken health. I have been trying to get sent back to the U. S. as instructor but it seems a rather difficult matter, as I have no one with influence to boost for me.

One of my Russian pupils entered the bedroom (via the roof in a Curtiss) the other evening and held the young lady's hand until she calmed down, then calmly walked down-stairs. He had got into a spinning nose dive. They often get lost and can speak no English, so are objects of suspicion. They are very nice chaps, and I like them very much.

By the way, I am applying for a long furlough next week in order to return to the U. S. to sit for an examination for First Lieutenant in the U. S. Aviation Section, but if it is granted at all, it will take at least two months.

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TOOK my R. A. C. ticket in April on a Maurice Farman shorthorn; that was easy, but I had to fly umteen other kinds of machines before I took my Military Brevet, aside from dozens of other tests.

I have had success from the start on each machine I have been put on, but there is one particular type of machine that they intend to put me on later that I consider unsafe for several reasons, so there may be trouble if I can not avoid this one. This machine may be all O. K. but candidly I am afraid of her, and it is not because of speed either. I have flown faster machines. It is rather difficult to get along, as I am the only American in the squadron, as usual, and naturally would prefer to be with my own countrymen, and—it has been two and one-half years since tasting pie!

Here's hoping to see you within the next three or four months—Sergt. D. I. LAMB, 8054, No. 42 Reserve Squadron, Royal Flying Corps.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN. To most Americans he stands head and shoulders above all others as American and democrat, as exponent of Americanism and democracy. Listen to certain words of his, spoken during our Civil War:

He who dissuades one man from volunteering, or induces one soldier to desert, weakens the Union cause as much as he who kills a Union soldier in battle. Yet this dissuasion or inducement may be so conducted as to be no defined crime of which any civil court would take cognizance. . . . In such cases the purposes of men are much more easily understood than in cases of ordinary crime. The man who stands by and says nothing when the peril of his Government is discussed can not be misunderstood; much more if he talks ambiguously—talks of his country with "buts" and "ifs" and "ands." . . . Long experience has shown that armies can not be maintained unless desertion shall be punished by the severe penalty of death. The case requires, and the law and the Constitution sanction, this punishment. Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert? This is none the less injurious when effected by getting a father or brother or friend into a public meeting and there working upon his feelings till he is persuaded to write the soldier boy that he is fighting in a bad cause, for a wicked administration of a contemptible Government, too weak to arrest and punish him if he shall desert. I think that in such a case to silence the agitator and save the boy is not only constitutional, but, withal, a great mercy.

The letter from which the above is taken was written by President Lincoln in connection with the case of Clement L. Vallandigham, an Ohio Congressman at the beginning of the war. Vallandigham proved so pronounced an obstructionist in the House of Representatives and his utterances were so disloyal that he failed of re-election in 1862. As a public speaker he continued his attacks on the Government. Among other disloyalties he denounced the draft. He was arrested, tried by court martial for treasonable utterances and sentenced to imprisonment during the period of the war.

BUT President Lincoln commuted the sentence and sent him over to the Confederates to be among his friends. A troop of cavalry escorted the ex-Congressman to the enemy lines and delivered him to a private soldier of an Alabama regiment on outpost duty. In the South he continued his encouragement of his country's enemies, but was not much more popular among the Confederates than he had been in the North. Later, from Canada, he conducted a long-range campaign for election as governor of Ohio, but was defeated by the overwhelming majority of over 100,000. To the people he was neither hero nor martyr but traitor.

I have taken the above facts largely from an article in the New York *Times* of August 19, but they were merely a freshening of my memory, for I come from Ohio and can remember how when a boy the name of Vallandigham was still anathema and he a local Benedict Arnold.

If the patient and kindly Abraham Lincoln took such a position in the cases of those who talk treason, our own attitude as good Americans need have no doubts attached to it. There are plenty of Vallandighams in this country right now and the logical and right thing to do with them is to send them over to live with the enemy they have been aiding and supporting by their utterances. Let the enemy feed them and bear the expenses of supporting its supporters. Why should *we* feed the hand that bites us?

CONSIDER those men who, like Vallandigham, are Congressmen, chosen by the American people to help in the management of American national affairs, entrusted by the American people with America's fate. Now I should be very much surprised indeed if any of these Congressmen were actually in the pay of the Kaiser or even if any of them realized that he is treasonably working against his own country. We can dismiss the idea that they are conscious traitors.

But they are producing the same *effects* that traitors produce. Therefore, for the sake of American safety and American

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honor, they should be suppressed and punished. Since they are not intelligent enough to realize they are acting as traitors act, they do not deserve hanging. Logically, however, we should send them over to the enemy so that they may live among the people they are aiding instead of among the people they are injuring.

Read Abraham Lincoln's words once more and apply them to the utterances and obstructive actions of these Congressmen:

UNDERSTAND, any Congressman has full right to vote and speak for whatever he honestly believes is right. But, in the first place, he should be intelligent enough to know that what may be right in some circumstances may not be right in other circumstances. And, in the second place, as the official representative of a democracy he should have at least a dim understanding of what democracy is.

If these Congressmen had brains and interest enough to consider what democracy really is they could not have followed the course they did follow. Democracy is rule by the people, and rule by the people means rule by the majority. Whoever in any way obstructs rule by the majority obstructs rule by the people, obstructs democracy. The minority have the right to vote and voice, but no right whatever to delay or prevent the vote and voice of the majority. When they do so they are attacking the very essence of democracy, attacking the fundamental principle of rule by the people.

And haven't we had about enough of street orators and German and pro-German publications? Can we not see, as Lincoln saw, that he who dissuades one man from volunteering weakens America as much as he who kills an American soldier in battle?

THAT the strange things in "The Island of Changing Shapes" should so largely prove actual facts will doubtless be as much a surprise to those of you not familiar with Ambrym Island as it was to me. Hear what H. A. Lamb tells us about the *Amil* houses:

In regard to "The Island of Changing Shapes," I would like to make clear the following points.

My experience of the South Seas comes to me from an uncle who was chief engineer in a cruiser which made the return voyage from China by way of the South Seas. I have in my possession his collection of shark-tooth swords brought from the Fiji group. This information is supplemented by Australian books dealing with the navigation, etc., of the islands.

Ambrym is an actual island, so named, lying in the New Hebrides, due east of Mallicollo. It is given in my chart of the South Seas. The Whitsun passage is also existent, although I believe it is now spelled Whitsunday. Of this I am not sure.

The custom of jacking up the departed in clay and assembling them in an *Amil* house is reported by Douglas Rannie, Government Agent for Queensland.

Everything in the story can be found in the New Hebrides to-day. The only liberty I have taken is to put the *Amil* house on a separate island from the village, and to create from this circumstance the *mullar* folk, or the unfortunates who are sent to the burial island and do not die. Also, to give more ritual to the burial than is actually the case. It is a fact that only the headmen are jacked up in the *Amil* houses, to give the living the benefit of their superior intellect. Rather ghastly, is it not, to have the dead sitting in a council of the living?

NOT often does a traveler have the experience of wandering into a council house of the dead. The *Amil* houses are to be found in certain villages of the South Sea Islands, where the skeletons of the dead are filled out with clay, bits of shell inserted in the eyes, and painted to represent life.

The feeling that a white man experiences on entering an *Amil* house is mingled awe and horror. The place is like a charnel-house; at the same time, the rows of dead standing upright around the structure make you instinctively remove your hat.

The natives, however, seem to believe that the presence of the skeletons benefits their councils. They attach great importance to the "doctor man" or witch-doctor of the village, who is the presiding genius of the *Amil* house. Few white men have seen the lifeless inhabitants of these structures, but three of the "inlaid" skulls are to be seen in the Brisbane, Australia, museum.

Poisons occupy much of the witch-doctors' time and attention. One bag made of spiders' webs was found, containing a small bamboo box. Inside this box was a ball of black waxy-looking substance in which was fixed a thin bone, sharpened at the end.

A native who saw the white man handling this black ball urged him to destroy it, saying it was deadly poison. His warning proved to be true, for a fowl was killed in five minutes by a single prick, and a small pig in ten minutes.

DON'T forget our readers' annual vote for the best ten stories in *Adventure* during the year. Any one eligible to vote if he's read at least seven of the issues between January, 1917, and Mid-December, 1917, inclusive. Serials, novels, novelettes, articles and short stories included; poems and "Camp-Fire" barred. Vote closes December 31, 1917, with allowance for those long distances away. Send in your vote any time after the Mid-December issue appears. All you need do is to write down your ten stories numbered in order of preference, and address and mail us the letter or post-card. If you like, add as many as ten

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more for complimentary mention. The same author may appear on the list as many times as you please.

The result of the vote will be published in a subsequent issue.

We want our readers to have all the say possible in making our magazine and this vote gives you one opportunity by guiding the editors in choosing the kinds of story the majority of you want.

A WORD from our comrade J. W. McGrath, now in training with the 13th Aero Squadron at Fairfield, Ohio, written in a field hangar. He is right in saying that the average American does not even yet fully realize the seriousness of our national situation.

We certainly get our share of training in this branch of the service. Besides aviation, we are required to study French, wireless, sanitation, machine guns, dynamics, electricity, etc. Uncle Sam believes in thoroughness, now that he is awake. Would like to go into details, but the lid is on.

Only yesterday we caught two poison-plot spies.

We in the service realize we are in a state of war, but the average citizen fails to comprehend the serious state of affairs.

About my time to go up, so will cut this off here.—J. W. McGrath.

ONE of you wrote in the other day suggesting that we should not require letters for Camp-Fire to be typewritten. We don't require it. We never did. We never will. Manuscripts of stories submitted to the main part of the magazine, that's another matter and all such manuscripts should be typewritten. But letters from you of the Camp-Fire? Typewritten nothing!

Our Camp-Fire is a place where we can meet and swap experiences and compare notes. And we seem to like it. Our Camp-Fire department is probably the most popular part of our magazine. Certainly there is nothing else like it anywhere in the world. To have a place where we can meet twice every month and listen to things we can't hear anywhere else, that is something most of us value very highly. The real adventurer hears with keen interest how others have fared in places he has known, how they have faced things that he has faced. The man who must stay at home and send only his heart wandering through the world finds the far world brought to him here. And when a man is willing to tell us the things we want to hear, shall we tell him he can't do it unless he does it with a typewriter? Hardly!

WE OF the Camp-Fire want to hear from any and all of our number who can tell us the things we like to hear and think about. Be sure we shall put no typewriters or other obstacles in your path. Talk to us, you who have roamed the strange places. Tell us about it, you who have lived a part among stirring deeds. Write to us, you who are lonely in some distant spot away from your own kind. Some of us are pretty sure to answer if you want us to; all of us are sure to let you alone if you want to be let alone. But be a good fellow and write us in any case. Tell us about that lonely spot so far away where you are bedding down. Most of us have never been there and we want to hear about it. Not the tourist dope, not the fancy descriptions. Facts is what we want. Inside stuff if you have it. What's been happening to *you* there? Pass on to the rest of us some of those little happenings you've been mixed up in or know about.

What? You're not a writer, you don't know how to put things down on paper the way the writer fellows do? Why, *we* don't give a ——. Why should we? What we want is to hear about things. You can talk, can't you? Well, talk! That's all we want. Be a good scout, not a clam.

DON'T give us just a list of places you've been. We'd rather really hear something about even just one of them.

And when you pull up your stakes and drift off to some other part of the earth, drop us a line about the new experience. Keep in touch with us; we want to keep in touch with you. Get the habit.

Of course you won't lie to us. There are always *some* of us who can call you. There are plenty of us who've scoured around a bit ourselves. No, give us the straight dope. There are lots of young chaps among us and we older fellows are either giving them a straight steer or keeping our mouths shut. Just open up and remember you're talking to friends. You're one of us and we want to hear from you.

You aren't a member of Camp-Fire? What do you mean? Of course you are. No formalities here. No initiation, no fees, no dues, no officers, no rules except to

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remember you're among friends and white men. You're not a regular subscriber to the magazine? That doesn't make *any* difference. All any one has to do to join is to want to join.

AND say, maybe there are some things you want to know that *we* can tell *you*. Out of the whole crowd of us you're pretty sure to find one or two or quite a lot who can give you the answer you've been hunting for. Ask us, anyhow. We all come to the Camp-Fire to swap experience as well as experiences, and we're glad to do our share if you'll do yours.

And don't forget that there are probably quite a few of your old friends and acquaintances among us to help make you feel at home—maybe some old side-kicks you've lost track of and been hunting for. Speak up, so they can know you are here. There are all sorts among us—your sort, too, whatever it is. And we're all glad to hear from you.

THOMAS SAMSON MILLER, in charge of our West Africa department in "Ask Adventure," sends the following which is of interest to all seeking adventure and employment anywhere:

A recent answer of mine (printed in the magazine) to a young man seeking employment in West Africa, in which I gave the names of two companies trading there, brought me a deluge of inquiries, and, I have reason to think, deluged the same companies with applications. I was much astonished, as neither the service, climate, pay nor general conditions are attractive.

Now the thing that struck me about my correspondents was that so very few had made any attempt to fit themselves to fill any berth; and what I now want to point out is that right now there are splendid opportunities of seeing the world and earning a decent living at the same time in many fields more attractive than West Africa. Some of the ways are:

The U. S. government is establishing free schools at coast ports in navigation and engineering, for the training of marine officers for the merchant service.

Large shipping companies are inviting applications from young men of fair schooling and good recommendations to become apprentices.

The steward's department of almost every ship leaving port these days is short-handed and will find a place for a greenhorn.

There is a continued call from South America for mining men, assayers, chemists, machinists, engineers and Spanish-speaking time-keepers, bookkeepers and store-keepers.

Right here in San Francisco the Alaska fishing and canneries and mining corporations are continually advertising for help.

Uncle Sam's Philippine Civil Service offers an attractive field, and in the technical branches of the Army and Navy there are splendid openings.

Never before in the world's history were there so many chances to see the wide, wide world. If your heart is yearning, get busy.

A SAMPLE case comes to my mind in a young man now buying copra somewhere in the South Sea Isles. A few months ago I met him in San Francisco, a "down-and-out." He was recently from the East; without local references, without trade, but fairly well educated, of good address, but had not the knack of walking himself into any old job that presented itself.

Just before meeting him I had noticed a window-card saying "Dishwasher Wanted." "Oh," he objected, "I never did anything like that. I was brought up decent." I argued him out of that impossible frame of mind. He went in and got the job, which was an all-night job, for which there were few applicants. He hung on to it and picked up something of cooking, to the end that, reading in a newspaper that a yacht was being fitted out for the copra trade—being made over into a power schooner—he saw there would be needed a cook, and went after the job. After a few trips his employers made him their buying agent—a very desirable job. He wrote me recently that he would soon have enough saved to jump to Australia and take a dab at sheep raising.

IS THIS fair? *Adventure* gives its readers quite a number of practical services entirely free. To have these services efficient it is necessary to make certain rules and publish them clearly and plainly. Most of you read those rules and follow them carefully. But some of you don't—merely think you know how to use those free services, bull ahead at it without reading their rules, and make lots of trouble thereby for yourselves and for us.

Do you know that we have to use regular form-letters to explain to such readers why they can't get the service they ask for or to explain how they can get it—that we have to state over again to them personally the very rules printed every month in the magazine but calmly ignored by them? I wonder whether any of you can guess how many, many hours of extra, utterly unnecessary work and trouble these inconsiderate and unappreciative ones have caused me and the rest of us here in the office? Is it a square deal?

A FEW of our readers have gone even a step farther. Our "Ask Adventure" department is for the service of our readers, to help them, to give them something they want, something that frequently proves of great value, financial and otherwise, to

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them. We don't charge them anything for it; we give it to them free, and gladly. All we ask is that they comply with the easy, simple rules. One of the rules is that an inquirer send a stamp to carry back to him the thing he asked for and that is given to him free. It would seem that any one who wanted a thing enough to write for it would be quite willing to let go of a two-cent stamp to get it from where it was given to him free and that he *certainly* wouldn't have the gall to ask the giver to pay the postage as well.

But it appears that a few very careless gentlemen or professional spongers have just that much nerve. I don't want to cast any unpleasant aspersions upon these said spongers but my honest opinion is that a man who will do that is so small that if he tried to go through the eye of a needle he'd be lost for three years, that a horned toad has him beaten for gratitude and a skunk for all-around decency. With which kind words we will sit down.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

Will sell: 1914, June—Dec. inclusive; 1915, Jan., Feb., March, Nov., Dec.; 1916, all; 1917, Jan.—Aug., inclusive. —MRS. W. F. PADDON, JR., 502 Twelfth Ave. S., St. Petersburg, Fla.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Adventurers' Club—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

National School Camp Ass'n—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—A similar organization cooperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Hurst.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 1
C. L. GILMAN having been made an officer in the U. S. Army, letters to this department should temporarily be directed to Harry E. Wade, Adventure Magazine, until we secure another expert to take charge of Mr. Gilman's field.

11. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

13. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

15. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

16. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps, NOT attached)*

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17. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★ The South Seas Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

24. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, care of H. E. ROBERTS, 55 John Street, New York, N. Y. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

Vancouver Island Hunting and Fishing

Question:—"What part of British Columbia would you suggest for a couple young men with about $1000 between them, and who are anxious to have a season of hunting and fishing? Also please inform me as to the ability to obtain claims in a desirable district, and the method of procedure in this case. I have heard a good deal about the Peace River country. Is this a farming region, or is it mainly a hunting and fishing territory?

"In regard to equipment for such a trip. Would you advise the making up of the necessary articles in the U. S. or wait until we are at the scene of operations? About what caliber rifles would be the best, a 30-30, or larger?"—B. B. TAYLOR, Wagner, So. Dak.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—The Peace River country will be a farming country when it is settled up but owing to the war and the set-back it has given to Canadian railway construction this will probably be a long way in the future. I am also of the opinion that it will be more of a place for a man with considerable capital to engage in stock raising or grain growing rather than a desirable location for a small-stake man. It is unquestionably a desirable hunting and fishing country but this is a very small item for the man who has an eye to the future.

Judging from your letter I would say that Vancouver Island offers the greatest inducements to a couple of adventurers such as you and your partner seem to be. Here are my reasons.

Vancouver Island is some 285 miles long by 85 miles across the widest part and although it has been settled and highly cultivated at the southern end at least one-third of it is as yet actually *unexplored*. Some realization of what this means may be gathered from the fact that the total area is over 16,000 square miles. The climate is one of the finest in America while the scenery is beautiful. There is an immense amount of land open to preemption for settlement which under the new legislation is now free to bona-fide settlers upon the performance of certain reasonable duties and improvements as prescribed in the pamphlet which I send you herewith. About 15,000 acres of this is in the Clayoquot district alone although some 4,000 acres have already been taken up.

As to hunting, the opportunities are unlimited and while I would never advise an inexperienced man to undertake trapping as a means of livelihood with nothing else to fall back on, if he handles it as a side line he will find that a few furs or a cougar scalp will come in handy when the flour barrel gets low. Cougars are very common owing no doubt to the great numbers of deer which are to be found in all parts of the island and which make easy picking for these rascals when they get hungry. For the cougar is a lazy beast and will not hunt until driven to it by actual necessity. He has even been known to "loaf" until absolutely exhausted by starvation and when in this condition is a very easy mark for the hunter. The wapiti is also found there although protected by law for some years to come. In the wilder parts, elk, bear, wolf and an occasional wolverine may be found while the smaller fur-bearing animals are comparatively plentiful.

The fishing is the very finest, the lakes and rivers abounding in salmon and trout while in the salt-water bays and straits you can catch almost everything from a two-ounce smelt to a two-hundred-pound halibut.

The game birds are also plentiful such as duck, goose, an occasional swan, plover, snipe, grouse and pheasant. Taken as a whole the question of a meat supply is one that is very easily answered if a person is forehanded and skilful enough to stock up in season.

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With regard to your rifle, a 30-30 is all to the good while all or any part of your outfit may be obtained at the various towns and cities on the island.

I am sending you a map and some literature which may be relied upon as fairly accurate bearing as it does the Government stamp instead of that of some railway land-exploiting company and if you decide to go will be pleased to tell you how to get there, the probable cost and so forth, since I am satisfied that you will find what you are looking for in the place I have described.

Placer-Mining in Southwest

Question:—"Is there any amount of placer-mining going on in Arizona or California? Is there much trapping done in the California hills? What are the best places to outfit from and buy a jackass, etc., to go prospecting?"—J. REDMOND, Montreal, Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Placer-mining is going on all the time to some extent in both California and Arizona. At present Arizona is in the lead. Quartz-mining is far more extensive than placer, however.

Oatman, Arizona, is booming as a quartz proposition right now. Black Mt., California, about eighty miles from Los Angeles, has shown up some good stuff lately. Most of the placer stuff is found in small deposits and is worked by men of small means, using home-made cradle. Pocket-mining is quite popular along the Merced River, near Yosemite. Miners get all the way from three to six dollars a day when they know the game, and work in established mines for other men. Going it alone they get from nothing, up—something of a gamble every time.

There are plenty of fur-bearers in the California mountains, but the woods are full of amateur trappers. Get your maps from the District Forester in San Francisco for this state, if you want to traverse the forest reserves. Address Mr. Coert Dubois, District Forester.

For California, go to Oroville or Weaverville and outfit there. For Arizona, go to Globe or head right out to Oatman. A jackass is a "burro" out here. Pronounced booroo. They sold formerly at about fifteen dollars a head. Now they bring seventy-five.

If you want my opinion, I think your chances are slim in either mining or trapping.

Sidelights On India

Question:—"I would like to get a little up-to-date information on India.

"Are the Hindoos spread out through the whole country of India or are they confined to certain states? Are they religiously superstitious and wherein do they differ from the Brahmins? Do any Hindoos hold high rank in their native states or lay claim to wealth? Do you know of any poisons peculiar to India or of any that are imported from the neighboring countries? Are the frontiers well guarded and is there any smuggling to speak of? Has the British Government complete control over all the outlying districts and what sort of a police force is used to preserve the law? Have you heard within the last few years of any isolated attempts to revive Thuggism?"—EDWARD F. MEDOSCH, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—I think that a tabulation of your questions will make my reply more comprehensive and comprehensible.

(1) Roughly speaking, the Hindoos and Mohammedans are about evenly spread throughout the whole of India. In some parts of the country, of course, one sect predominates over the other. Even in Ceylon, which is essentially a Buddhist country, there is a fair sprinkling of Hindoos.

(2) The Hindoo religion consists of a pantheon which is closely analogous to the classic Roman and Greek. That is to say, that they have a series of gods and goddesses with various attributes which correspond to the forces of nature. Krishna, for instance, is the God of birth, while Shiva with his wife Kali attend to the other end of the equation. Of Kali more later.

(3) Brahmins are Hindoos pure and simple. They represent the priestly, and therefore the highest, caste. Next in order come the Ksattrias, and then the Thakurs. All these are Hindoos, only of different castes, or social states.

(4) Many Hindoos in their own states, as well as in the native states "protected" by the British government, and in the purely British territories possess great wealth. The Gaikwar of Baroda, for instance, is one of the richest potentates in the world; while in civil life I might mention B. C. Tata, a Parsee merchant and a fire worshiper as a financier of very high standing.

(5) Poisons? India is full of poisons; but the wild and weird fiction that one reads of the mysterious Hindoo with a new and unknown poison which baffles the skill of the sleuth is purely a chimera of the author's brain. Plain arsenic is largely resorted to by most men who wish to get rid of an obnoxious neighbor. I myself, was fed a considerable dose of the same by certain Hindoo priests who thought that I was dipping a little too deeply into some of their sacrificial ceremonies. That I still live is only due to the fact that the dose was too large for practical purposes. Snake poison is often applied to daggers to increase their efficacy.

(6) The frontiers are guarded as well, probably, as any in the world. The frontier forces are always engaged in small tribal wars and are right up to the minute in efficiency. Rifle smuggling is profitable enough to attract many adventurers, but it is too dangerous to be really alluring.

(7) The British government exercises control over the whole of India, as well as the adjacent country of Burma, with the exception of certain "independent states," which mean native states who were good during the mutiny and other times of stress and have therefore been permitted to exist as autonomous states under their own princes. The before-mentioned state of Baroda is such a one.

(8) There is a regular police force recruited from among the natives of the country, with a small percentage of Europeans who hold the higher ranks. This force is supplemented in the outlying districts by the "military police." On the whole, considering that the population is three hundred millions, this force is very effective and order is well preserved.

(9) Thuggism, or Thaggi, as it is more properly called, is a very interesting phase of the worship of the Goddess Kali. Since Kali is the goddess of death, certain fanatical minds have conceived the pleasant fantasy that the best offering that can be made to her is human life. The religion of the Thugs, then, calls upon them to kill as many people

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as possible in the name of Kali. At one time the deaths attributed to the practise of Thaggi amounted to the astounding figure of more than fifteen thousand in one year. The British government inaugurated a very vigorous campaign against this menace and practically stamped it out. In fact official reports claim that Thaggi is now non-existent. But men who know India will tell you that more than one mysterious death is the work of a lone Thug.

Personally, I can not state with certainty that I know of a case of Thaggi. That is to say that I have no proof that a death which has come to my notice is caused by Thaggi; but on the other hand every shred of evidence in the case pointed to it. I have talked with many natives who swear that sporadic instances of Thaggi break out now and then, though the police records book them as plain murder for causes unknown. I may say that personally I believe that the native theory is correct. It is safe to assume, however, that Thaggi can never revive as a popular outdoor sport such as it used to be.

Marketable Mussel Shells

Question:—"How can I find out if mussel shells in a shoal I know of are saleable as buttons? How could I get the right to sell the shoal? It is in Mississippi."—Mrs. S. W. Scott, Vidalia, La.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Your letter raises an interesting point of law, as regards the Mississippi statutes. Mussels are not protected in any of the States, except incidentally as the result of food (oyster, clam, and other shellfish) statutes, unless lately shell laws have been enacted.

If the shells of which you speak are in navigable waters, or a part of the Old Mississippi, you should have no riparian rights to contend with. If the waters are subject to private claim, you should first obtain a blanket lease, covering "fishing, shelling, turtling," etc.

Nearly all shell waters, however, are open to the public, and those that fish for the shells have them, unless the fishers are hired to do the work, which you would not have difficulty in doing, if you engaged negro or other help for the work.

As to the market for these particular shells, I believe that your best method would be to gather ten or twelve specimens of each kind of mussel shells and clean the meat out; this you can do by putting them into a kettle and heating till they open. Do not boil. Boiling "checks" the shells. About 160 degrees Fahrenheit will serve.

Send these shells to the Bureau of Fisheries, Washington, D. C., and ask this Government bureau for information about the value of the various kinds of shells. They will send you a list of markets. I would suggest that you keep specimens of each lot, properly numbered, so that you will know which shells are which.

You may find detached pieces of shell material in the mussel meat or shells, and these should be preserved; perfect shapes are valuable pearls, and rough shapes are "baroques" or "slugs," which have definite values—$1.00 an ounce, and sometimes greater value.

Further information on the subject is contained in enclosed slip. Shell fisheries have been opened on the west side and west parts of Louisiana lately.

Chances In Brazil

Question:—"Thank you for last letter. I would like some further information about Brazil. What is the passage rate there, from New Orleans, if possible?"—J. J. White, Fierro, New Mex.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—I believe it is better to embark for Brazil from New York than from New Orleans. I am pretty sure there is no direct line from New Orleans and it is a case of going to Colon, catching the Royal Mail for Barbados and then taking a Lamport & Holt boat from there. And, curious to relate, the fare from Barbados to Rio is about what it is from New York to Rio. The fare from New York to Rio de Janeiro, first class, is about $100, and second class, $75. These were the exact figures a few months ago and I do not know what effect the war has had on the fares.

Drop a line to Rusk & Daniels, General Agents, Lamport & Holt S. S. Line, 8 Broadway, New York, and they can give you the prices at present and the sailing dates. I believe their boats leave New York every two weeks and make Rio in seventeen days. Between you and me, their second class is no good. First class, though, is pretty decent and as it is rather a long trip I think a man will not regret the difference he has to pay.

Now I will tell you another way to get down. This is the way I made the trip once. They ship quite a lot of lumber down to either Brazil or Argentine from Gulfport, Mississippi. I caught one of these boats when they arrived in Barbados to take coal and fixed it up with the captain to go as a passenger for about a third what it would have cost me on a passenger boat. In order to do this I had to go before the Russian consul and sign on as purser (she was owned in Finland and flew the Russian flag and of course she did not have or need a purser). This ship was the *Merkador* and I was never treated better in my life. The captain has a table all to himself and we ate with him.

I will never forget the food we ate nor the wines we drank nor the cigars and cigarets we smoked. Of course he lost money by taking me but of all the lonely jobs in the world the worst is that of captain of a tramp. He can not associate with his men and most of them welcome a chance to have company. I am pretty sure you can strike a cargo boat in New Orleans, or even Galveston, that will call at Rio, if you got some one to tip you off. Get hold of the captain and take him around town with you. As a rule they are good sports. There are many of them who would not take your money for passage. For a long trip I will take a cargo steamer every time in preference to a passenger boat. As a passenger and guest of the captain you have the run of the ship. The staterooms and dining-saloons on any good freighter are superb.

If you will write to your senator or congressman and ask him to request Mr. John Barrett, Director General, Pan-American Union, to send you "Special Data of Brazil," No. 72 (C) and "Brazil in 1913" by J. C. Oakenfull (No. 126) you will receive an illustrated pamphlet and a bound book of 604 pages giving some good information on Brazil. Also you might request him to have Mr. Barrett send you whatever copies of the "Pan-American Bulletin," the official organ of this society, that have articles bearing on Brazil.

Rio de Janeiro is, in my opinion, the most beautiful city in the world. It is gayer than Paris and

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there is more money loose in Rio in one week than there is in Paris in a year. Wages are very high. Telegraph operators on the railroad between Rio and São Paulo make $165, $200 and $250 per month in American gold. Living expenses are rather high but after a man is there a few months he can get on to the ropes. When I struck there I had several thousand dollars and I tried all the first-class hotels but finally when my money ran low I found good boarding-houses (*pensaos* they call them) for about $10 per week. I have no doubt if a man was married and rented a house he could live just as cheaply there as he can in New York for I saw that eatables were fairly cheap in the markets and meat much cheaper than it was in the States at the time. One thing that is very costly is clothing. I paid around $60 for a suit until I found that I could get almost any steward on the Royal Mail boat from Southampton to bring me over a suit and anything else I needed on his next trip.

There are a great number of Americans working for the Light & Power Co. there. All of the officials are Americans and Canadians and many of the splicers and mechanics are also. There is an old American dentist located on Rua 7th of September. He has made a big fortune and has a large farm just outside of Rio where he raises fancy dogs for fun. He is an old bachelor and rather grouchy but I found him to be a mighty fine man. I have forgotten his initials but his last name is Crum. There are two other dentists in São Paulo (about 480 miles from Rio). They are the Prettyman brothers. Americans stand better in Brazil than any other foreigners and are looked up to by the Brazilians. You know that this is hard to find in the Latin-American countries. They also have the cash and are willing to pay the price. The bigger bluff you "chuck" the better in Rio. You can't make it too strong.

The laws have been very lax in regard to the practise of medicine, dentistry, etc., and I note in a recent paper from Rio that a medical congress has met and passed resolutions calling upon the government to pass more stringent laws. According to the constitution of Brazil a foreigner has equal rights with Brazilians in all matters and from my own experience I think an American has the better of it. I am unable to give the exact optical laws of this country. Most of the books I have accumulated deal with Central America.

I suggest that you write Illmo. Senhor Domicio da Gama, Brazilian Ambassador, 1780 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, D. C., for information concerning these laws. I am sure he will answer with all courtesy, especially if you state that you are going down there to settle. They are very anxious to get Americans down there. I have never been able to find out anything from any of the Central American consuls either but you will find different people in the Brazilian Embassy. And if they can't tell you I can find out by writing some of my friends in Rio. I went there to stay until the next boat and I stayed over a year. The only reason I left was because I thought Buenos Aires was better. But it wasn't.

Rio is right on the tropic line. It is about the same south latitude as Mazatlan, Mexico. It is absolutely healthy. São Paulo is cooler. There is a railroad running from São Paulo to Montevideo. I made this trip and saw many large towns like Punto Grosso, Curitiba, Santa Maria, etc., that would be ideal places for you if you did not like the heat in Rio. As you go south it gets cooler. The state of Paraná is about the same climate as North Carolina. Rio Grande do Sul is the cow country. Brazil is a large country, larger than the U. S. without Alaska, and they have all kinds of climate. Chances are good there. It is something like the West in the old days. I should have stayed. I am sorry now that I left but I hate to go back and start in where I left off.

I have no other object in view in boosting Brazil other than I liked Brazil and the Brazilians. They treated me fine and I have been the cause of several men going there since I left. I have eaten *fejon preto* and *farinha da pao* with the *caboclos* and I have lolled around some of their best clubs and they are all to the good. I guess you know how a man feels when he is treated good in a strange country.

Northern Ontario

Question:—"Three of us are planning a trip this Fall to the nothern part of Ontario and would like your advice. Two of us are Canadians and one is an American. We will have among us about $700, and we would like to settle in the northern part of Ontario if the conditions are favorable. Would there be any duties on our personal belongings, including guns and ammunition, under these conditions? What part of northern Ontario would you advise us to go, where there is good hunting, fishing and trapping, and yet be in a reasonable distance, say a hundred miles or less, of a railroad or a place where we could get provisions? What route would be best to take and what kind of an outfit will we need for the Winter?

"What are the hunting and fishing laws for both Canadians and Americans, also the law covering the taking up of land by citizens of either country? Kindly describe the climate conditions. What crops could be raised so far north and is there any prospecting done in that part of the country? Is the Hudson's Bay Company opposed to any one hunting or trapping in northern Canada? Is there any chance of securing work in that part of the country if it should become necessary to do so, and do you think $700 will be sufficient?"—STANLEY W. CADWELL, Solvay, N. Y.

Answer: by Sangster:—I am afraid this approaches dangerously close to an inquiry on "trapping for profit," which is barred from answer by the writer.

Your letter leaves much data to be desired on which to base an adequate reply. So far as undertaking to advise any questioner on "how and where to go" to trap for profit, I have, as stated, barred such, as stated in Ask Adventure, primarily because without knowing personally the questioner and his ability to make a success of trapping in the real North, where deep snows make methods entirely different from those in the States necessary for success and also without knowing the financial ability of each inquiry to carry them through without figuring on any revenue from trapping, it is a dangerous thing to advise on.

There lies a region over half the area of Europe in Canada's north, especially above the Height of Land in Ontario and Quebec. So far as trapping for a living goes, most of the best pockets for fur are trapped by either Indian, breed or whites and assiduously guarded against outsiders.

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The Hudson's Bay Company probably do not encourage outsiders trespassing on their Indians' areas, but nowadays at any rate any opposition they may feel they dare not openly show.

To trap for profit "on your own" in either Ontario or Quebec Province you would have to take out a non-resident trapping license costing fifty dollars. I note two of your party are termed Canadians, but presume you are now residents of the United States. You would have to post a forfeit customs duty on rifles or any firearms, which would be returned you on re-entry to the U. S., but stand as duty paid should you not return.

The Clay Belt, stretching across western Quebec and northern Ontario has produced some fine potatoes, some good grain, etc., but danger of Summer frosts would more or less, until the areas are more opened up, tend to prevent any great success in farming operations.

The game and fishing laws of the respective Provinces may be had on application to the Dept. of Colonization, Mines & Fisheries, Quebec, P. Q. (for Quebec); write the Department of Colonization at Toronto and Quebec for respective laws governing the taking up of land in the North.

Certain kinds of work (for instance in saw-mills) might be obtained in northern Ontario or Quebec to tide over.

Seven hundred dollars should be ample to give the proposition a thorough try-out; as I said above, whether or not you could make success of it is something I dare not venture an opinion on.

The writer has some log-camps established in the Bell River District, 178 miles east of Cochrane, on the new Government Transcontinental Line, in areas affording good fur-trapping (muskrat, mink, otter, beaver, fox, lynx, etc.) It might be a good move for your bunch to take one of these for the winter and try it out. It can be supplied either with or without a competent guide to show you the "how" of trapping. Of course this suggestion is made merely in case you may wish to take this one here; the Camp might even be bought outright at the actual building cost (around $125); is some 19 x 15½ ft., peeled spruce, board floor, board roof, paroid-covered, with heater, 4 berths, 2 lower and 2 upper, table, etc., lying 32 miles north of the C. G. T. steel at Nottaway Station, at which point provisions and supplies may be purchased. The details of clothing, etc. required depends to a large degree on where you're located.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

POOLE, ARTHUR, known at school as "Tinker." Formerly of Dagenham, Essex, Eng. Went to South Africa for several years. Came to New York about eleven years ago, staying at the Starr Hotel, where I met him again. Said he was going to the "Fruit Belt" of Arizona. His people had already emigrated to U. S. A.—Address HARRY TYLER, 64 West 107th St., New York City.

STANLEY, JACK (Quills), formerly shipswriter U. S. C. G. *Miami.* (Now *Tampa*) write old shipmate "Spike." Back for duration of war.—Address R. E. W. care *Adventure.*

BITTEL, GEORGE, left home New York City (Bronx) in 1898. His mother is anxiously waiting to hear from him. Any information would be greatly appreciated.—Address CHRIS BITTEL, 2082 Washington Ave., New York City.

TANNEHILL, EDWARD DEWITT, last heard of in Chicago and Texas. Any one knowing of his whereabouts please notify his sister.—Address MRS. RUTH HARING, 18 Orchard St., New York City.

UPTEGROVE, ELMER, last heard of in Detroit, Mich. in 1915.—Address A. J. CUTLER, 311 So. Division Ave., Grand Rapids, Mich.

TEDDY, (E. E. G.) Where are you? Write Jack immediately. Have you forgotten Manila and the promise of the "Snake 1916?"—Address L. T.

STOVER, WILLIAM H., any information gladly appreciated by his old friend.—Address PATRICK K. COOPER, Co. "D" 2nd U. S. Inf., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

VAN DER HORST, FRITZ. Born Amsterdam, went to South Africa, when a boy. Served under General Botha in the Siege of Ladysmith in the Boer War. Arrested and deported for defiance of military authorities after occupation of Johannesburg, 1900. I assisted to obtain leave for him to return in 1904, from U. S. A. Left again next year for America. Married Miss Arbeiter. Last heard from in Middle West. Write.—Address John J. Harold, 64 West 107th St., New York City.

SIGNAL, CLARENCE J., last heard from in Castleton, N. D., July 1916. 5 ft. 4 in. 140 lbs., 19 years. Write your brother. Any one knowing of his whereabouts please write.—Address THOMAS W. SIGNAL, U. S. Naval Training Sta., Seattle, Wash.

GARDE, CORPORAL C. B., with Canadian Command 48th Highlanders. Last heard from at St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, England. Left forearm shattered in "big drive" in Sept. 1916. Letters fail to bring response. Please write your old friend.—Address D. L. TEVIS, D Battery, 1st Illinois Field Artillery, Fort Sheridan, Ill.

HELMICK, ROY J. and Carl H., last heard of at Flandran, S. Dak. Dec. 1915. Any information appreciated by their father.—Address D. C. HELMICK, care *Adventure.*

TALLMAN, HENRY MERRITT, last heard from March 1913 at White Salmon, Wash. 29 years. Any information concerning him will be appreciated by his sister.—Address K. E. TALLMAN, 476 Laurel Ave., St. Paul, Minn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

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THORPE, VAL, my husband. Last heard from in Detroit, Mich. Want very much to hear from you. Write me at home.—Address HELEN THORPE, Detroit, Mich.

BLISS, ARCHIBALD JOHN, commercial traveler. Lived in Lethbridge, Alta. 1913-14. Supposed to have gone to Vancouver, B. C. Last heard of at Y. M. C. A., Chicago, Ill. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address H. B. BLISS, Tudor, Alberta, Can.

BLAKEMORE, C. HOMER, last heard of in Yuma, Ariz., Aug., 1914.—Address FRONTENAC HARTSHORNE, 814 San Antonio St., El Paso, Texas.

MARTIN, CHARLES A., last heard from in California. His sister would like very much to hear from him. She has important news.—Address MRS. O. B. WHITLATCH, 116 7th St., Parkersburg, W. Va.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WHITLATCH, JAMES MONROE. last heard of in Ohio. I would like very much to hear from him. His daughter Alma inquires.—Address MRS. W. C. CLENDENIN, 116 7th St., Parkersburg, W. Va.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First November or Mid-November issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirers from this magazine.

BASKER, LEWIS; Borden, or Bordon, Irene; Campbell, Arthur; Darlington, Chas. H.; DeVeroy, Leslie; Dunn J. G.; Footsie, Usher; Ford, Ed. W.; Hammer, Charles; Heinze or Hanies; Lackay, Phoenix A.; Marshall, Charles N.; Olson, John; Page, Donald W.; Payne. W. J.; Phillips, Wm. L.; Ramsey, Fitch W. or Voet Fitch; Sullivan, Eric; Stephenson, "B"; Terrusse, L. S.; Tuggle, Wills S. Hastlar Gal Breath, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather.

NUMBERS L. T., 284, C 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

In the Mid-December number, out November 18th, will be:

The Petals of Lao-Tze *By J. Allan Dunn*

A book-length novel of mystery and adventure in China, complete in this issue.

Phanfo the Terrible *By Charles Brown, Jr.*

How a white missionary, counting the minutes of his stay this side of eternity, officiates upon the aching tooth of a savage South Sea Island headhunter.

Out of the Wreck *By Captain A. E. Dingle*

A strong tale of the sea. The terrible battle of the elements, and the revolution these mighty forces effect in the heart of a man.

To Quit My Post *By Edwin C. Dickenson*

A young soldier—a charming maid—a stern army rule which it seemed easy to break.

Nerves of Iron *By W. C. Tuttle*

In which *Magpie Simpkins* and *Ike Harper* discover that they are notorious gunmen. Their attempts to maintain this reputation start lively times in the mining town of Spotted Dog.

The Education of Mr. Giles *By Russell A. Boggs*

Mr. Giles needed a lesson. But all the railroad telegraphers were afraid to give it to him. Then *Calvin Barnard* came along.

Claymore *By Arthur D. Howden Smith*

The second instalment of t is four-part serial of the thrilling days in Old Scotland.

The One Alone Called Kiwasa *By Hugh Pendexter*

A story of the early frontier days in the Virginia colonies, and of a frontier trail-runner who braved not only the Indians but his own superstition as well.

Hog-Tying the Golden Bow *By Douglas S. Watson*

There is much more to gold-mining than just digging the metal from the ground. Even hog-raising may have to be introduced, as at the Big Dipper Mine.

General Grant's Cigar *By James Francis Dwyer*

Because two old grandfathers, who had fought on different sides during the Civil War, can not remember that the great struggle is over, trouble once more invades peaceful Galloping Dick Valley.

The Gift of Experience *By George L. Catton*

Peter Falkner's cache is gone. For days he has tramped Alaskan trails on an empty stomach counting upon that stored-up food. Starvation staring him in the face, he does what few men will do.

MID-DECEMBER ADVENTURE

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AMERICANS!

Scotch this Snake

THERE is treason in America. It is time that an ugly fact be met squarely, fearlessly and with action—at once.

There are ugly things going on in this country. Disloyal individuals, groups, organizations are burrowing into our business, our schools, our churches, our press—even into the halls of our Congress.

Disloyal efforts, deliberate and cunning, to hamper our Government in its conduct of war, are aimed at the very foundations of our institutions, our traditions, our ideals.

No true American can longer refuse to take notice.

* * *

The first step is to find the facts and nail them down.

To Samuel Hopkins Adams has been assigned the task—the most staggering assignment ever accepted by an American reporter.

You can help by getting behind Mr. Adams on the job. If you have facts that would be useful, if you know where facts can be got, tell him about them. A letter directed to him in care of *Everybody's Magazine* will reach him promptly.

* * *

Samuel Hopkins Adams is a reporter as accurate as he is fearless, an investigator whose record of solid achievement has won him the highest rank in American journalism.

There is no telling where Mr. Adams's investigations will carry him—where a multitude of trails may lead.

The only instructions he received was this: "Go the limit."

The first of his series of remarkable articles appears in the December issue of *Everybody's Magazine*, now on sale. More will follow.

* * *

Ask your dealer for the big new *Everybody's*, and leave your order for the entire Adams series. The unusual timeliness and variety of other articles, fiction, and illustrations, will make your fifteen-cent investment a profitable one.

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You *bet!* Chesterfields give smokers not only a taste that they like, but also a *new* kind of smoking enjoyment—

Chesterfields "get across," they *let you know you are smoking*—they *"Satisfy"!* And yet they're *Mild.*

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